



HATE CRIMES ON CAMPUS: MYTH AND REALITY

MAY 10, 2004

The American Conservative

THE NO-WIN WAR

Christopher Layne
James Pinkerton
Fred Reed

NONE OF THE ABOVE

I hope the indications are wrong, but it's beginning to appear as if *The American Conservative* may be leaning toward endorsing George W. Bush for president. Please don't do it!

In recent television appearances and articles, Pat Buchanan seems to be softening his stance toward the president. Even Taki, in the April 12th issue of this magazine, refers to George W. Bush as an "obviously very decent person."

Is it "decent" to lead a country into a phony war resulting in 600 soldiers dead and thousands more with maimed arms, legs, and faces? Is it "decent" to have nurtured a bloated federal bureaucracy beyond the wildest dreams of even the most liberal Democrat? Is it "decent" to refuse to protect the borders of our nation as millions of illegal immigrants are rewarded while Americans are increasingly left jobless? The list goes on and on, as you well know (and have often described in these very pages!) True conservatism will continue to falter if Mr. Bush is re-elected.

George W. Bush's presidency has been a monumental failure. This fact alone is sufficient to withhold endorsement for a second term. And to those who say that Bush was misled by his advisors: nonsense! He is in charge, and he alone should take responsibility. The only way that Mr. Bush could impress me now is if he were to resign and take his brood of vipers with him. Please consider not endorsing either party's candidate.

PAUL FERKUL
Fairview Park, Ohio

NO THANKS

While I heartily agree with Phil Kent that conservatives scoff at George Bush's recent immigration proposal (April 12), I feel compelled to add that even illegal

immigrants find the plan laughable. Several months ago, while living in California, I had a discussion with a 28-year-old illegal alien from Mexico. This fellow, a carpenter and house painter by trade, was living in San Francisco and saving money to buy professional stereo equipment for a DJ business in Mexico. He couldn't wait to return to Mexico, though. Not only was he having trouble finding work in California's depressed economy, but he said he detested America's "un-spiritual" culture. He pointed out several flaws in the Bush immigration plan: there are staggering numbers of illegal aliens and no way ever to track them, few illegal aliens will bother to register with a "temporary program," and it would take an impossibly large effort even to begin processing all these people if they actually wished to apply for temporary status.

STEVEN CAPOZZOLA
Washington, D.C.

FROM PROTESTANTS TO PAGANS

Samuel Huntington's implication that America is a blessed nation because of its Protestantism is outrageous (April 12). The implication that a Catholic America would be some Third World hell-hole is equally outrageous. The examples of Mexico, Brazil, and Quebec are disingenuous because these are not Catholic nations. The Church is persecuted by the left-wing neo-Marxist regimes in Mexico, Brazil, and Canada.

What Huntington fails to mention is that the current terminal disorder within American culture is the inevitable failure of Protestantism. Where a diversity of opinion exists as to true Christian doctrine, each man can create his own religion, picking and choosing like a salad bar. Eventually heresy gives way to blasphemy—Episcopal ministers

giving Mass to pets and their owners, women priests, and lesbian Methodist ministers chomping at the bit to preside over gay weddings—each doctrine false and man-made, each unable to draw a line in the sand against the rushing tide of paganism. After all, by what authority can any Protestant say no to any other, when it is all a matter of personal taste?

Huntington obviously knows very little about Catholicism and its history. This anti-Catholic screed is a relic of the Know Nothing Party days.

DAN DOYLE
via e-mail

THINK JIHAD

No doubt there are many conservatives like myself who have an intellectual orbit that swings from paleoconservative to neoconservative points on the ellipse.

The trouble I have with the paleo Right, as represented by this magazine, and the war in Iraq is a willingness to overlook the aggressive posture of Islam. It is Islam that has tried at least twice to conquer Europe. This time, instead of challenging the West on the battlefield, they are using immigration.

Furthermore, resurgent Islam shapes all the events in Israel, Central Asia, Iran, Kashmir, and Iraq. All the criticisms written in this magazine against Israel and the Iraq War are less substantial when compared to the threat Islam poses to the West and all the residents who live on "Islam's bloody borders."

JEFFREY PECK
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EPA PHOTOS

[COVER]

The Best of Bad Choices

BY CHRISTOPHER LAYNE Given the improbability of internationalizing the occupation and the implausibility of bringing in more troops, America should set a timetable for leaving Iraq—and follow it. **Page 8**

[IRAQ]

Desperately Seeking a Strongman

BY JAMES PINKERTON Iraq needs someone who can establish central authority, restore a monopoly on violence, and eliminate the bin Ladenites. We know just the guy. **Page 11**

[DIPLOMACY]

International (Not So) Greatness

BY LEON HADAR The administration's Greater Middle East initiative is an exercise in self-delusion. **Page 18**

COLUMNS

7 Patrick J. Buchanan: Fallujah may mark the high tide of American empire.

31 Taki: Those who plotted the war aren't the ones doing the dying.

NEWS & VIEWS

4 Fourteen Days: Taxes and Turncoats; *Weekly Standard* Says More Wars Next Term; Driving Illegal Immigration; Castenada vs. Huntington

21 Deep Background: The Mexican Exception; Heroin, Our GIs' Afghan Companion

ARTICLES

13 Fred Reed: Democracy Explodes Over Iraq—Few Survivors Expected

14 Steve Sailer: Claremont's Hate-Crime Hoax

16 Ryan M. Horn: Cornell doesn't call it "hate" when black attackers beat a white student.

ARTS & LETTERS

23 Steve Sailer: Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill: Vol. 2"

24 R.J. Stove: *Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars* by G. Edward White

26 Elizabeth Wright: *The End of Blackness* by Debra J. Dickerson

29 Kara Hopkins: *The Progress Paradox* by Gregg Easterbrook

MEANWHILE, BACK IN IRAQ...

[ECONOMICS]

REVOLTING TAXES

For the rest of us there's Christmas. For the federal government there's April 15. Reflect upon all the noble causes to which your tax dollars are going: Ahmad Chalabi's Swiss bank account, the National Endowment for the Arts, President Bush's plan to play Space Invaders with real-life rocketships. For this we have an internal revenue code of some 2.8 million words and an IRS with more investigative agents than the CIA and FBI combined. Too bad bin Laden didn't cheat on a 1040; he might have been nabbed by now.

[RHETORIC]

THESAURUS, PLEASE

To the many bad consequences flowing from the elective war against Iraq, one must add the debasement of the rhetoric of freedom. In his press conference last Tuesday, President Bush called up the words "free" or "freedom" 50 times. "Free societies are hopeful societies ... I'm working to spread freedom, a free society is a society in which someone is more likely to raise their child in a comfortable environment ... that's why I'm working to spread freedom ... I will press for freedom ... I believe in the power of freedom ... we have an obligation to help spread freedom ... we have an obligation to work towards a more free world ..." etc., to the point of idiocy. This president, before he's done, is likely to make much of the world smirk at the very idea of freedom.

[NEOCONS]

THE WAR NEXT TERM

You might have thought the chaos in postwar Iraq would have spurred some second thoughts among the neocons who advocated an American invasion of the country long before 9/11. But you would be wrong. They are still enthusiastic about this war, and indeed, are

pushing for more. Witness Reuel Marc Gerecht, *Weekly Standard* contributing editor and (since Bob Kagan has displayed some fleeting signs of sanity) the weekly's main foreign-policy writer. Gerecht writes, "Voluntary change in the Middle East is no change at all. But we are off to a good beginning. The war on terror had, thank God, a second act. We will all have to wait until after November to see if there will be a third."

The neocons, in other words, are keeping quiet for now about their plan to push America into wars against Iran and Syria, but if Bush wins, plans to "liberate" more Muslim countries will be set in motion.

[POLITICS]

PASSIONATE ATTACHMENT

It's a mistake to expect too much from the 9/11 investigatory commission, which may be inhibited from embarrassing Bush administration principles. Philip Zelikow, the commission's executive director, and before that a member of the ultra-secret President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, is a close friend and long-time colleague of Condoleezza Rice—which might have softened the questions Rice was subjected to.

During the hearings, Zelikow made news for another reason: Inter Press

SO DOES THIS
MEAN TONIGHT'S
DANCING IN THE
STREET PARTY HAS
BEEN CANCELLED?



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Service quoted a speech he gave at the University of Virginia in 2002. Said Zelikow, "Why would Iraq attack America or use nuclear weapons against us? I'll tell you what I think the real threat [is] and actually has been since 1990—it's the threat against Israel. And this is the threat that dare not speak its name, because the Europeans don't care ... and the American government doesn't want to lean too hard on it rhetorically, because it is not a popular sell."

We can see why the administration didn't think it would be "popular" to tell soldiers and their families that American troops were being sent into battle in order to protect a foreign country from a hypothetical future threat and so instead hyped a tall tale about Saddam's WMD, democracy in Iraq, etc. But frankly, given the seriousness of blasting apart international law and America's long-standing alliances to launch itself into a quagmire, we think the country would have done better with a more honest account of the reasons for war. Perhaps that is a subject for another commission.

[IMMIGRATION]

LICENSE TO KILL

Of the 19 hijackers who boarded planes that fateful September morning, ten showed legal driver's licenses that they

obtained in Florida. Common sense should have immediately prompted that state's governor to tighten the loopholes that facilitated the atrocity, but the opposite has happened. Following on his presidential brother's amnesty announcement, Gov. Jeb Bush has unveiled a proposal to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. "A policy that ignores them is a policy of denial," he said. No, governor, a policy that ignores the law violates your oath.

The Bushes may think that they can bring Hispanic voters into the GOP fold by flouting immigration law, but in California, the state most affected by lax border control, the president's approval rating has slipped to 38 percent. Yet the Republican governor's numbers are riding high—and with good cause. Taking a cue from the frustrated electorate, Arnold Schwarzenegger campaigned on a promise to repeal a law granting licenses to illegals and swiftly made good on his word. He would seem a far better model for Jeb, but brother Bush isn't buying.

If the Florida plan succeeds, an estimated 400,000 illegals will be eligible. And how many more will come when they hear that the Sunshine State is a self-made haven for lawbreakers? Untold thousands—and don't count on them to become Republicans, or, for that matter, not to enroll in flight school.

[GLOBALISM]

DOLLAR DROP

The latest ranking by Swedish magazine *Veckans Affaerer* suggests that the market for budget bookcases is booming. By their calculation, Ingvar Kamprad, founder of the furniture chain Ikea, has overtaken Bill Gates (net worth of \$46.6 billion) and Warren Buffett (net worth of \$42.9 billion) as the world's richest man.

Forbes lists Kamprad thirteenth, reasoning that he doesn't own all of Ikea,

which he runs with his three sons. But the Swedish magazine, probably exhibiting a stronger sense of national pride than mathematical precision, reports, "We think that Kamprad controls all of Ikea"—a holding valued at \$52.6 billion.

Bragging rights will sort themselves, but most analysts miss the larger point: first or thirteenth, how did a cheap-furniture maker come to breathe such rarified air? The answer lies less in his couches than his currency. Though Kamprad's company is global, his home is European, and the euro has risen 36 percent against the dollar since the beginning of 2002. Americans buy about \$500 billion a year more from foreigners than they buy from us, stoking a trade deficit that tops 5 percent of the U.S. economy and severely weakening our dollar. That condition is unsustainable, and absent a radical correction, America will be overtaken on even more lists—as the lines at Ikea grow longer than ever.

[CULTURE]

PAINFUL TRUTH

The hearings to determine the constitutionality of the federal partial-birth abortion ban have so far been informative about the procedure—and the mindset of those who perform it.

When questioned about fetal pain, abortionists invariably bob and weave. In the New York hearing, Dr. Carolyn Westoff said that she pointed out to her abortion patients that some of the anesthesia they receive passes to the fetus but then also stated that she did not know if fetuses feel pain. Dr. Timothy Johnson, one of the plaintiffs challenging the ban, similarly pleaded ignorance and also admitted that the question never crossed his mind.

Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand of the University of Arkansas, testifying in the Lincoln, Nebraska hearings, answered without equivocation. He stated that unborn children suffer "severe and excruciating

pain" during the partial-birth-abortion procedure as evidenced by an increase in heart rate, blood flow, and hormone levels. "The physiological responses have been very clearly studied," he told the court. "The fetus cannot talk ... so this is the best evidence we can get."

The reason Dr. Anand is so clear where Drs. Westoff and Johnson are so ambiguous is that this is precisely the information Americans need in deciding whether partial-birth abortion should be legal—and abortionists no doubt realize that disclosing this would put them out of a job.

[WORLD]

GRANDIOSE ALLIANCE

There comes a point at which expansive alliances make a nation not more secure, but less. NATO is drifting close to that line—if it hasn't already crossed it. The alliance now includes every member of the old Warsaw Pact save Albania and the Soviet Union itself. And while Russia will not be joining any time soon, other territories once under Moscow's thumb have already been admitted. Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia all became NATO members last month, along with Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia. Are America's strategic interests congruent with those of Lithuania and Balkan Slovenia?

The number of new admissions alone poses problems for NATO. With 26 member states, some question whether the organization can long continue to operate on decision by consensus, a principle that was sorely tested in the run-up to the Iraq War. That NATO's mission has evolved so rapidly in the past five years, to include operations outside of Europe and, in its intervention in Kosovo's ethnic war, actions that cannot be characterized as defensive, further clouds the picture. The Russians have watched all of this with equal parts resentment and resignation. For now, there's little they can do.

Early in the '90s, NATO's future was a topic of vigorous policy debate, especially among conservatives. It's past time to revive that discussion. Just how much of the world must be brought into the alliance? For some, NATO is to be the fireman of Europe, putting out periodic blazes in the Balkans and as far afield as Central Asia—but in Kosovo, as we saw, the alliance doused the flames with gasoline. The organization is still a vital and a useful thing, but a careful reappraisal of its direction is very much in order.

[ELECTION] THIRD WAY

These are frustrating times for conservatives. The Democrats are firmly the party of the Left, a collection of interest groups drawing benefits from the government. But the Republican Party has become synonymous with big government, big war, and surrender on immigration.

Is there an alternative that principled conservatives can support in good conscience? The Constitution Party is trying to provide one. At a recent luncheon in Washington, D.C. the party's likely presidential nominee, attorney Michael Peroutka, laid out his vision for America. Peroutka is opposed to government spending that is not authorized by the Constitution. He would abolish the federal income tax. He is strongly pro-life and opposed to the Bush amnesty plan. He would attack the problem of judicial activism at its root, rather than piecemeal by single-issue constitutional amendments.

So far the Constitution Party has not been able to translate its conservative purity into significant public support. It has yet to find a viable strategy for persuading a large number of voters to pull the lever for its candidates rather than the Republicans. This is something the party's leaders are going to need to

address in order to play a major role in the national debate. But conservatives ought to welcome their participation. Since the two major parties have strayed from the nation's founding principles, new voices in third parties deserve a respectful hearing.

[NATION]

IDENTITY CRISIS

Standard practice for dealing with those who advocate immigration reform is swift and merciless—and Harvard professors are not spared. *Foreign Policy* recently printed an excerpt from the forthcoming Samuel P. Huntington book that stated, "The single most immediate and most serious challenge to America's traditional identity comes from the immense and continuing immigration from Latin America, especially Mexico." With all due speed, the usual suspects set out to tar the sage old scholar with a well-worn brush: "xenophobic," "racist," "elitist," "un-American." As is the custom of the open-borders lobby, few countered the substance of his arguments.

Credit one opponent for at least trying. Jorge Castaneda, the former foreign minister of Mexico, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, concedes the Huntington complaint that assimilation is not occurring. But his solution is not to ease pressure on the Melting Pot. Rather, Castaneda argues, "[T]he United States must make a major effort to construct a new type of assimilation that is both voluntary and effective." He goes on to exhort his countrymen, "[W]e have to consider our compatriots in the U.S. as part of a Mexican nation ... and continue to push for improvements in their lives."

The realization of Castaneda's vision—a borderless nation with a fluid citizenry—would birth a different America. That Huntington acknowledges as much and judges the alternate identity inferior makes him not a racist, but a realist. ■

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Fallujah: High Tide of Empire?

At Versailles, 1919, Lloyd George, having seized oil-rich Iraq for the empire, offered Woodrow Wilson mandates over Armenia and Constantinople. “When you cease to

be President we will make you Grand Turk,” laughed Clemenceau.

As there were “no oil fields there,” writes historian Thomas Bailey, “it was assumed that rich Uncle Sam would play the role of Good Samaritan.” Though unamused, Wilson accepted the mandates.

Fortunately, Harding won in 1920 and reneged on the deal. Lloyd George and Churchill were left to face the Turks all by their imperial selves. Had we accepted Constantinople, Americans would have ended up fighting Ataturk’s armies to hold today’s Istanbul.

After 9/11, however, our neoconservatives, who had been prattling on about “global hegemony” and a “crusade for democracy” since the end of the Cold War, sold President Bush on their imperial scheme: a MacArthur Regency in Baghdad.

And so it is that we have arrived at this crossroads.

What Fallujah and the Shi’ite uprisings are telling us is this: if we mean to make Iraq a pro-Western democracy, the price in blood and treasure has gone up. Shall we pay it is the question of the hour. For there are signs Americans today are no more willing to sacrifice for empire than was Harding to send his nation’s sons off to police and run provinces carved out of the Ottoman Empire.

In bringing Bush’s “world democratic revolution” to Iraq, we suffer today from four deficiencies: men, money, will, and stamina.

First, we do not have the troops in

country to pacify Iraq. Some 70 percent of our combat units are committed in Afghanistan, Iraq, and South Korea already. If we are going to put more men into Iraq, U.S. military forces must expand.

Those who speak of democratizing Iraq as we did Germany tend to forget: in 1945, we had 12 million men under arms and four million soldiers in Europe. German resistance disappeared in 1945 with the death of Hitler. There was no guerrilla war against us. Today, our army is only 480,000 strong and scattered across 100 countries. And we have 129,000 troops in an Iraq that is as large as California and an escalating war against urban guerrillas.

Second, we are running out of money. The U.S. deficit is \$500 billion and rising. The merchandise trade deficit is headed toward \$600 billion, putting downward pressure on a dollar that has been falling for three years. Nations with declining currencies do not create empires, they give them up.

Then there is the deficit in imperial will. President Bush sold the war on Iraq on the grounds that Saddam was a man of unique evil who could not be trusted with a weapon of mass destruction. Today, whatever threat Saddam posed is gone.

While America supported the president in going to war, we have not bought into the idea that we must democratize the Islamic world or we are unsafe in our own country. Polls show that nearly half the nation believes we should start coming home.

Which brings us to our fourth deficiency, stamina. Empire requires an unshakeable belief in the superiority of one’s own race, religion, and civilization and an iron resolve to fight to impose that faith and civilization upon other peoples.

We are not that kind of people. Never have been. Americans, who preach the equality of all races, creeds, and cultures, are, *de facto*, poor imperialists. When we attempt an imperial role as in the Philippines or Iraq, we invariably fall into squabbling over whether a republic should be imposing its ideology on another nation. A crusade for democracy is a contradiction in terms.

While it would be nice if Brazil, Bangladesh, and Burundi all embraced democracy, why should we fight them if they don’t, and why should our soldiers die to restore democracy should they lose it? Why is that our problem, if they are not threatening us?

What Iraq demonstrates is that once the cost in blood starts to rise, Americans tend to tell their government that enough is enough, put the Wilsonian idealism back on the shelf, and let’s get out.

If attacked, Americans fight ferociously. Unwise nations discover that. Threatened, as in the Cold War, we will persevere. But if our vital interests are not threatened, or our honor is not impugned, most of us are for staying out of wars.

That is our history and oldest tradition. It may be ridiculed as selfish old American isolationism, but that is who we are and that is how we came to be the last world power left standing on the bloodstained world stage after the horrific 20th century.

Americans will cheer globaloney. They just won’t fight and die for it. Nor should they. ■

[exit strategy]

The Best of Bad Choices

Given the Iraq War's mounting costs and impossible goals, America should transfer sovereignty and come home.

By Christopher Layne

THE ADMINISTRATION'S IRAQ policy is in shambles. Iraq has become a geopolitical humpty-dumpty that America cannot put back together, and the time has come for the United States to withdraw.

We now face a full-blown uprising against the occupation of Iraq. Events plainly belie the administration's spin that order will soon be restored and that the revolt is just the work of a few Iraqi extremists and a handful of terrorists from other Middle Eastern states. Even top officials in the British government—America's most loyal ally—understand that the administration's take on Iraq is divorced from reality. As British Foreign Minister Jack Straw said, "The lid on the pressure cooker has come off. There is no doubt that the current situation is very serious and it is the most serious we have faced. It plainly is the fact today that there are larger numbers of people, and they are people on the ground, Iraqis, not foreign fighters, who are engaged in this insurgency." Americans should not allow the administration's "perception management" campaign—a fancy bureaucratic term for lying—to pull the wool over their eyes.

From a policy standpoint, an even greater concern is that the administration believes its own disinformation about events in Iraq. But there are three disturbing facts about the insurrection that cannot be swept under the rug. First, what began as a small-scale insurgency mounted by Sunni "dead-enders" and "former regime elements" now has morphed into a broad-based popular rebellion joined by large numbers of Shi'ites. The Shi'ite revolt is especially troubling because—to the extent that the Bush II administration had any strategy at all for administering postwar Iraq—it was based on the assumption that the United States could co-opt the Shi'ites and gain their support for Washington's plans to create a "democratic" Iraq. Second, Iraq's Sunnis and Shi'ites—heretofore deeply antagonistic to each other—now are finding common ground in resisting the occupation. Here U.S. policy seems to be having a bitterly ironic and quite unintended consequence. Previously, Iraq, which Britain artificially cobbled together from the Ottoman Empire's wreckage, lacked a sense of national identity. Now, however, resentment of the American

occupation is creating an Iraqi nationalism shared by Sunnis and Shi'ites. Third, outrage at America's heavy-handed use of military power to suppress the uprising has alienated the very Iraqis Washington has counted upon to form the core of a new government to which "sovereignty" can be transferred. Although they were hand-picked by U.S. officials, leading members of the Iraqi Governing Council now are condemning American policy and distancing themselves from Washington.

Where does U.S. policy go from here? There are three options: internationalizing the occupation, increasing U.S. troop strength and cracking down hard on the insurgency, or withdrawal.

Internationalizing the occupation by bringing in the UN and/or NATO is a non-starter—pure political grandstanding. First, Iraq now is so dangerous and chaotic it is doubtful that the UN wants to step in and take responsibility for trying to fix things. Second, for the same reasons, other nations are not going to rush in and send troops to restore order in Iraq. Indeed, it now is apparent that others are concluding that their best option is staying out—or, if they already

have troops there, getting out—of Iraq. Third, although some individual NATO members have token contingents in Iraq, the alliance has its hands full in Afghanistan (and the Europeans are stretched to the breaking point by their non-NATO Balkan and West African peacekeeping commitments). NATO just doesn't have more troops that it can send to help the U.S. in Iraq.

There is another reason internationalization cannot be a real option as long as the Bush II administration remains in office. Even if the UN agreed to step in, it would do so only if Washington agreed to give the international community real decision-making authority in Iraq. The Bush administration will not do this because giving up control over Iraq would be tantamount to abandoning the very goals for which it went to war in the first place: using Iraq as a platform for establishing American military dominance in the Persian Gulf; transforming Iraq into a dependable, oil-supplying client state; and using Iraq as the launching pad for the proposed "democratic transformation" of the entire Middle East.

Increasing American troop levels and suppressing the insurgency is not a viable option, either. Although the U.S. has enough firepower to dampen down the insurrection—at least for a while—this would be a self-defeating policy because there no longer is a military solution in Iraq. There is a good reason—to quote the title of Andrew Mack's important article that appeared some years ago in the journal *World Politics*—big states lose small wars.

Insurgencies start small but gain widespread political support by driving a wedge between the civilian population and the occupation forces. Here, insurgents count on the occupation forces to be their unwitting accomplices. When the occupying forces resort to violent and coercive measures,

they lose politically by alienating the population. As events in Fallujah and elsewhere demonstrate, such tactics fan widespread popular anger and resentment. Regardless of what happens in Iraq in the next several weeks, a watershed has been reached. Iraq's population is seething and hostile, and if the United States stays on in Iraq, henceforth it will face broad-based political, and armed, resistance to the occupation. In that setting, the U.S. will confront the asymmetry in motivation that causes big states to lose small wars; the Iraqis are fighting for their country, but the United States is fighting for goals that are ephemeral.

Contrary to what Mr. Bush has said, the growing numbers of Iraqis supporting the insurgency do not "hate freedom." It is just that they define "freedom" as freedom from American rule.

THE U.S. CONFRONTS THE **ASYMMETRY IN MOTIVATION THAT CAUSES BIG STATES TO LOSE SMALL WARS**; THE IRAQIS ARE **FIGHTING FOR THEIR COUNTRY**, BUT THE UNITED STATES IS FIGHTING FOR **GOALS THAT ARE EPHEMERAL**.

Now, in this regard, the administration hopes it can placate Iraqi nationalism by handing over "sovereignty" on June 30. But Iraqis are not fooled by this, and Americans shouldn't be either. As things now stand, Iraq will be sovereign in name only because the U.S. will still be wielding military, economic, and political control in Baghdad.

The administration has dug a hole in Iraq. It is time to stopping digging deeper. The war was a tragic, avoidable mistake, and those who opposed it have been vindicated. The administration should be held accountable, both for leading the nation in war under false pretenses and for its willful failure to

think through the consequences of going to war with Iraq. As James Fallows recently pointed out in the *Atlantic*, the administration was warned about many things. It was warned by the then-Army Chief of Staff that stabilizing postwar Iraq would require the long-term commitment of several hundred thousand U.S. troops. It was warned by the Army War College that if American forces remained in postwar Iraq for any length of time, they would soon cease to be viewed as liberators and be seen instead as a hostile occupation army. And it was warned that Iraq was a singularly poor candidate for a "democracy transplant" because it lacked the essential prerequisites for a successful democratic transition. (And if by some chance the U.S. did transplant democracy to Iraq, we would rue the day. A democratic

Iraq would be virulently anti-American and anti-Israeli.) The administration turned a deaf ear to these warnings because it considered them to be "anti-war"—that is, undermining its already decided-upon policy of overthrowing Saddam Hussein. And, of course, the administration was correct: these warnings did cut the legs from underneath its case for going to war because they demonstrated that the administration's policy would lead the U.S. into an Iraqi quagmire.

Of course, it can be said that all this is true but is just water under the bridge: we are in Iraq now, and it is "defeatist" to suggest that the United States "cut and

run.” There are arguments that can be marshaled to support continuing American involvement, but they are not very convincing. And if they are accepted, it will mean that the U.S. has to stay in Iraq for a long, long time no matter what the cost in lives and treasure—and even though there is scant prospect of ultimate success.

First, some will claim that if the U.S. withdraws Iraq will fall into chaos. Of course, the U.S. has been in Iraq for a year and that country is in chaos. Second, it might be claimed that if America withdraws Iraq will become a terrorist haven. But the truth is that the longer

allies nor its adversaries questioned Washington’s determination to defend vital U.S. interests.

There is a more heart-wrenching argument against U.S. withdrawal: how can we justify the loss of American lives to the parents of those military personnel who have been killed in Iraq? The real question, however, is how many more parents do we wish to send into mourning. The argument about sunk costs—whether in lives, in wounded (some 3,000 U.S. troops have been wounded in Iraq, many grievously), or dollars (some \$121 billion in 2003 and another estimated \$50-75 billion this

There is no point in being Pollyannaish. In the long run, the U.S. will be better off leaving Iraq. In the short-term, however, there will be consequences—not all of which are foreseeable—if the U.S. withdraws. But that misses the point. Sooner or later the U.S. is going to end up leaving Iraq without having attained its goals. Washington’s real choice is akin to that posed in an old oil-filter commercial that used to run on television: America can pay now, or it can pay later when the costs will be even higher.

Some 45 years ago, France found itself involved in a conflict very much like that in which the U.S. is involved in Iraq. Algeria was a bitter, bloody, and interminable struggle. The French could not prevail but were unwilling to bow to reality. Charles de Gaulle—a statesman of great vision and courage—cut the Gordian knot and extricated France from the unwinnable war in Algeria. Although painful, it was the right decision. George W. Bush is no de Gaulle. He is incapable either of admitting that his administration blundered into Iraq or of cutting America’s losses and disengaging. Whether any other political leader in the U.S. is capable of stepping up to the plate and demonstrating de Gaulle-like wisdom—which might require admitting to having made a misjudgment in initially backing the decision to go to war—remains to be seen. But plainly, the time has come for a statesman to step forward and ask the American people the question that must be asked: if the United States remains in Iraq, how do we tell the U.S. troops there that one of them will be the last one to die for a mistake? ■

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THE UNITED STATES WITHDREW FROM VIETNAM, AND IT **SURVIVED TO TRIUMPH** **IN THE COLD WAR: THE DOMINOES DID NOT TOPPLE, AMERICA'S WORLD** **POSITION DID NOT CRUMBLE.**

the United States stays in Iraq, the more that country will become a magnet for Islamic fighters who want to take us on. Staying the course will not make things better, because America’s bloody suppression of the current uprising not only is alienating many Iraqis who were—up to now—acquiescing in the occupation (however reluctantly) but also is stirring up anti-Americanism and creating more terrorism throughout the Middle East. Third, it is said that if America fails to prevail in Iraq, our enemies—not just in the Middle East, but worldwide—will doubt U.S. resolve and will be tempted to challenge the United States in future crises. Well, the same arguments were made against withdrawing from Vietnam. But the United States withdrew from Vietnam, and it survived to triumph in the Cold War: the dominoes did not topple, America’s world position did not crumble, and neither its

year)—can always be invoked to stick with a failed policy. But staying the course—continuing to pay these costs in pursuit of policy objectives that cannot be attained—is not the answer. Instead of compounding our losses in Iraq, we should be cutting them.

The United States has no good options in Iraq but the least bad is this: Washington should transfer real sovereignty to the Iraqis on June 30. It should tell the Iraqis to work out their own political future among themselves and turn over full responsibility for Iraq’s external and internal security to the new regime in Baghdad. Simultaneously, the United States also should suspend all offensive military operations in Iraq, pull its forces back to defensive enclaves well away from Iraq’s cities, and commence a withdrawal of American forces from Iraq that will be completed on December 31 (or on January 20, 2005).

[a modest proposal]

Desperately Seeking a Strongman

Saddam was not without his uses.

By James Pinkerton

ARE IRAQIS UNGRATEFUL, barbarous, and un-democratizable? And will these ingrates prove to be a drag on George W. Bush's re-election prospects? Lately some of our neoconservative friends, the folks who cheered the crusade into Iraq from their armchairs in Washington, have grown concerned about the consequences of their actions.

Ken "Cakewalk" Adelman told the *Washington Post*, "It's a lot tougher slog-ging than I expected." The *New York Times*' Tom Friedman observed, way *ex post facto*, that successful liberation "was always a long shot." He added that insurgents "can be turned back only by an Iraqi army motivated by a sense of nationhood and a desire for self-determination," and without that motivation, "we cannot win in Iraq." Friedman wrote those words, of course, before the April 11 report that a whole battalion of the new Iraqi army had refused to go to Fal-lujah to support U.S. Marines. Gosh, a strong Iraqi leader who built his career fostering secular Iraqi nationalism would come in handy right about now...

In 1729, Jonathan Swift issued his famous "Modest Proposal": the Irish should eat one another's babies as a way of reducing the population of the unwanted poor. So here's my Modest Proposal: bring back Saddam Hussein in 2004. I don't know if he's tanned, but after a year out of power, surely he's

rested and ready. Only Saddam, guns and machismo and all, could solve the bevy of problems the Bush Doctrinaires have created in Iraq.

As we consider the woes that the neo-cons face, one by one, we shall see that Saddam is the Right Man. First, the grat-itude gap. The *Weekly Standard*'s Fred Barnes traveled to Iraq and found the road to democracy lined with "sullen" and "suspicious" Iraqis badly in need of an attitude adjustment. "Their whining, their ethnic squabbling, their anti-Amer-icanism" keep them from bursting into "an outbreak of gratitude for the great-est act of benevolence one country has

cooler and give him back his Sunni trian-gle; count on him to put the Leviathan back in the Leviathan State.

For his part, *National Review*'s Jonah Goldberg is having second thoughts about Iraqi democracy. He argues that we all should be "asking ourselves whether elections should be the last thing on our checklist for Iraq or the Middle East." He notes that Muslims, including Turks, tend to vote an anti-American line. Indeed, data on interna-tional public opinion from the Pew Center suggest it's a darn good thing that they're not holding real elections in such countries as Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and

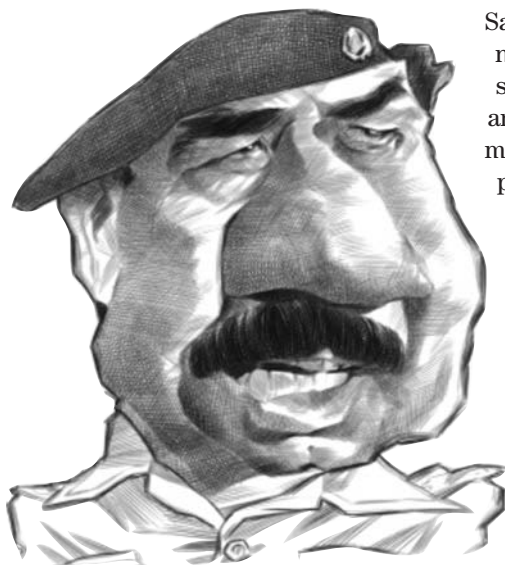
I DON'T KNOW IF HE'S TANNED, BUT AFTER A YEAR OUT OF POWER, SURELY HE'S RESTED AND READY. ONLY SADDAM, GUNS AND MACHISMO AND ALL, COULD SOLVE THE BEVY OF PROBLEMS THE BUSH DOCTRINAIRES HAVE CREATED IN IRAQ.

ever done for another." As we are aware, the Butcher of Baghdad knew how to deal with whiners.

Next, George Will reminds us, "the first task of the occupation remains the first task of government: to establish a monopoly on violence." So if what's needed is seizing control of the means of violence-production, then Saddam is Hobbes's Choice. Take him out of the

Pakistan. So why should Iraq be differ-ent? Come to think of it, a little less democracy in Spain might have kept that key member of the Coalition of the Willing on board with Bush.

As for the dangers that our soldiers now face in Iraq, Oliver North cuts through to the nub of the problem: "Thus far, despite the horror of what happened this week in Fallujah, all the



suicide terrorists in Iraq have apparently been outsiders In part, that's because Saddam did not permit radical clerics to open madrassas in Iraq." The clerics whom Saddam used to lock up and kill all now have their own armies. Indeed, Ayatollah Ali Husaini al-Sistani—who looks to be the best possible "moderate" alternative to Moqtada al-Sadr—seems to be at least as anti-Israel as Saddam; recently he called upon "the sons of the Arab and Islamic nations to close ranks, unite and work hard for the liberation of the usurped land" held by "the occupying Zionist entity."

Saddam, the devil we knew and could manage, was unable to hurt Israel and he was always able to suppress his own Shia. But if those Shia gain control of most or all of Iraq, we'll have to ask: will they be able to improve upon the Shi'ite suicide tactics that made Hezbollah so feared a decade before al-Qaeda? Or will the Iranians, also Shia, apply to hegemonize three-fifths of Iraq and all that oil? The answer is easy: with Saddam in the saddle, we won't have to worry; the trains might not run on time, but at least they'll run on Sunni time.

So, my friends, I present to you the Great Sunni Hope. His bluster aside,

Saddam was no threat to the U.S., as now we know. His rattletrap fascist-socialist dictatorship kept Iraq poor and pathetic, completely incapable of maintaining any sort of WMD stockpile. And while Saddam might have harbored a stray bin Ladenite or two, Ba'athist Iraq had to get in line far behind such "friendly" countries as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Pakistan when it came to producing anti-Americans. Why? Because with Saddam in charge, Iraqis were too busy hating him to worry about hating us. Ah, for a return to the good old days.

Moreover, Saddam was so obnoxious that even his fellow Arabs and Muslims hated him. He managed the seemingly impossible feat of having bad relations with almost all his neighbors—Turkey, Syria, Iran, Kuwait. What's not to like about such dividing-and-conquering? Does America really want the alternative, which could be liberating-and-uniting—against us? Indeed, given that Iraq is a naturally rich country, boasting the second largest oil reserves in the world, it's easy to imagine that any leader but Saddam would

wants without having to eat any French crow is to reinstall the one leader that France finds even more repulsive than Bush—the ever-unlovable Saddam. When he was in power, even the French were on board with sanctions and inspections; they supported a new policy of sending "intrusive"—i.e., heavily armed—WMD inspectors into Iraq as an alternative to American invasion.

Instead, sans Saddam, America faces an all-out civil war in Iraq and perhaps a region-wide firestorm. The Shia might end up with a Shi-Iran, the Kurds will get Kurdistan—if they can keep it from the Turks—and the rump of Sunnistan might be the ultimate in al-Qaeda-welcoming failed states.

So let's hope we can get Saddam back. Yes, it will cost us; we'll have to go back to giving him arms and money. But fortunately, Don Rumsfeld is still available for another Baghdad grip-and-grin—just like old times.

And who knows, if we offer even more help than we did in the '80s, maybe he'll take on the ayatollahs again. That would provide our friends the neocons with yet another boon: they would no longer have to expend energy agitating for regime

DO WE REALLY PREFER A **STRONG ANTI-AMERICAN IRAQ** TO A **WEAK ANTI-AMERICAN IRAQ**?

prove effective at making secret deals with the likes of the Russians and the Chinese to gain the menacing tools of "national greatness." Do we really prefer a strong anti-American Iraq to a weak anti-American Iraq?

Finally, there's the issue of restoring the pro-American alliance. Ken Adelman now urges Bush to call for help from allies, even as he warns them all, "Now is not the time to say I told you so." And the best way for America to get what it

change in Iran. Our man in Baghdad could become our man in Tehran, too. Which, of course, would give them more time to explain how the whole Iraq operation was Colin Powell's fault. ■

James P. Pinkerton is a columnist for Newsday and a fellow at the New America Foundation in Washington, D.C. He served in the White House under Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush.

Democracy Explodes Over Iraq

Few survivors expected

By Fred Reed

HELP ME PUZZLE OUT Iraq. I'm just a country boy and don't understand Advanced Thought or high strategy. I admit it. Tell me about Iraq—quick, 'cause it seems to be blowing itself all to flinders, and it's hard to study something the which there ain't no more.

Now, as I understand it from the White House itself, it's all because of three diehard Saddamites, two terrorists, and an outside agitator. The White House says ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths percent of Iraqis love us and want us to bomb them and invade them and starve them with embargoes, and only a few soreheads don't like it. And I believe the White House. You can only lie so long before you slip up and tell the truth. I figure they're about due.

What I think is those rascally diehards and the outside agitator must be fast. I mean, they get from city to city so quick they make it seem like the whole country wants us to go somewhere else, anywhere else, when really they all love us. If I worked for them Nike shoe people, I believe I'd get those terrorists to sign an advertising contract. Michael Jordan was swift, but compared to these guys he's a federal program.

But I want to understand about strategy. Yesterday, it said on CNN that the White House bombed a mosque full of people and killed 40 of them to make them democratic. It was because the two terrorists or maybe the outside agitator was inside. Being as I am unwashed and don't know much, I'd have said it wasn't the shiniest thought in the idea basket. You got a country full

of people who take religion real serious, and so you bomb a church in the middle of services.

But what do I know? Somebody called Mark Kimmitt, a brigadier general, said to CNN, "When you start using a religious location for military purposes, it loses its protected status." If they hid in mosques again, we'd bomb them again, he said. Now that he has explained it, it makes sense to me. If bombing one church doesn't make them democratic and love us, then bombing some more churches will. It wouldn't fly in West Virginia, but that's a different culture. Arabs like being bombed.

Some folks would say Kimmitt has to be dumber than a bucket of catfish. I'm less sanguine. I've known catfish. Kimmitt makes a catfish look like fifth-century Athens. If I were part of the Iraqi Resistance, I couldn't think of anything I'd like more than some damn fool blowing up mosques. It would save fortunes on recruiting expenses.

When I lived in Alabama, which never invaded Arab countries—we figured it was none of our business—people used to say as how the two greatest Confederate generals were George McClellan and Ambrose Burnside. I reckon the two most effective outside agitators must be Kimmitt and Paul Bremer.

Granted, I don't know much about the White House. I never get calls from Mr. Bush or his ventriloquists. Still, I figure he must know a lot about the Middle East. I guess he must speak several languages as well as a little English. General Sanchez in Baghdad and all the American officials

speak good Arabic, of course. They must. Bush especially must speak Arabic. Why, it's practically a second language in Texas. It wouldn't make sense to send people to Iraq who couldn't talk a lick of the local lingo and barely knew where they were. Don't you think?

One thing the White House has done real well is housetrain the press. Even I can see that. Reporters today are well-behaved suck-ups, like those fuzzy little lapdogs you could glue to a stick and use for a duster. Notice how we never hear anything about old Saddam? (Note that I'm on first-name terms with him.) I guess it's not our business, and the papers aren't going to ask. Ever hear honest interviews with the troops in Iraq? Naw. That's not our business either. I mean, they're not our sons, brothers, husbands, and neighbors or anything.

But you can bet that ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths percent of our soldiers love what they're doing, and care deeply about democracy in Iraq.

I see hope, howsomever. I have read that we are getting advice from Israel on pacifying Muslims. You know, when we think one of the three diehards, two terrorists, or the outside agitator might own a house, we bulldoze it and punish the entire town. (It's starting to look as if diehards own most of the houses in Iraq. I guess we're fighting a war against real-estate magnates. Maybe if we raised mortgage rates...)

Skeptics and other traitors say that the Israelis are the most provably clueless people alive when it comes to pacifying Muslims. They've been at it for 50

years, and some guy still blows up in a shopping mall every 20 seconds. This isn't fair. Americans are impatient people. Things take time. Given that there are more Iraqis than Palestinians, I figure we'll get the job done in about 300 years. If we send more troops.

Now, some people tell me that I'm all soft and squishy on terrorism and need to learn about realpolitik. They may be right. As best I can see, realpolitik is a mood of self-congratulatory pugnacity accompanied by complete witlessness about how people work. It is usually associated with paranoia and the empathy of a table-leg. And it isn't spelled well.

Anyhow, realpoliticky friends tell me that what we need to do is teach these people a sharp lesson. If somebody shoots at us from the town of Falafel, we should destroy the city. That'll show 'em—bow-wow, grrr, woof. There is a certain logic to this. Dead people are inherently peaceful. In classical antiquity armies put cities to the sword, adults, children, dogs, and goldfish. It sure enough pacified them.

Maybe that's what we're doing. As I write this, CNN says Mr. Bush is attacking Falafel, or maybe it was Wahabbi, with an AC-130 Spectre gunship. Spectre makes a pretty good sword. In another life as a military columnist I flew in those things, then the H model though they're probably U's now. If memory serves, they now have a 105mm howitzer, 40mm Bofors, and 25mm Gatling stuck out one side. Spray a city with those, and they'll love freedom, I say. And us, too. I always love people that blow up my neighborhood. Don't you?

What I think is the Iraqis need to learn that democracy isn't easy, and doesn't come cheap. ■

Fred Reed's writing has appeared in the Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, Harper's, and National Review, among other places.

Hate Hoax

Fake a race crime, get a pep rally.

By Steve Sailer

I AM PERHAPS the world's most easily amused person. As an old marketing researcher who enjoys looking for patterns in daily life, I'm almost never bored. Yet, while wandering the flowery campuses of Southern California's Claremont Colleges, I found the soft spring afternoon so placid that I was ready to curl up under a tree for a snooze. The most exciting moment during my exploration came when a Frisbee-golf four-some politely waited for me to walk by before playing through.

Perhaps all this genteel serenity explains the psychodramas that a sizable fraction of the staff and students seem compelled to concoct for themselves. Just the month before, a long-festering mass hysteria over white racist student-thugs supposedly infesting the campus had culminated in a huge night rally in which thousands of blackshirted students had chanted their hatred of "hate," while the administration stood by silently, despite knowing that there had been no hate crime, just a leftist professor's hoax.

In 1887, New Englanders founded Pomona College, now ranked fourth among liberal-arts colleges in the country by *U.S. News*. With the population of the San Gabriel Valley's posh orange grove belt booming in the 1920s, the trustees chose a clever way to expand. To preserve small-college intimacy while exploiting the economies of scale of the mid-sized university, they created a collegiate consortium modeled on Oxford

and Cambridge. Eventually, four more undergraduate colleges of about a thousand students each sprang up on adjacent campuses sharing a single massive library.

Claremont fostered institutional diversity while other universities were homogenizing themselves in their attempts to be all things to all people. Claremont's Harvey Mudd is sometimes derided as an imitation Cal Tech, but then Cal Tech is well worth emulating. In contrast, Pitzer, the least prestigious school, is a Sixties relic stressing social activism.

Opened in 1946, Claremont Men's College taught economics and government from a conservative perspective, rare during that era of liberal dominance of intellectual life. Political philosopher Harry V. Jaffa, still energetic today in his mid-80s, made CMC a hub for his idealistic, Lincoln-lionizing interpretation of his mentor Leo Strauss's theories.

In 1976, Claremont Men's College went co-ed—although its neighbor Scripps remains all-female—changing its name in 1982 to Claremont McKenna College to keep its CMC initials. It is quite exclusive today, with an average SAT score around 1380.

In 1999, Pamela Gann became CMC's first president who was a registered Democrat. She didn't seem happy heading a college with a moderately conservative reputation and tried to use "diversity" to make CMC less diverse and more like every other college. Gann and

the conservative professors fought bitter battles over affirmative-action hiring.

Gann's frustration with her rightist holdovers seemed to feed into the growing paranoia at some of the other Claremont colleges, where the staffs nurture an obsession among their "diverse" students (i.e., everybody except non-Hispanic heterosexual gentile white males) to navel-gaze over whether or not they feel "comfortable with the climate."

It was 72 degrees with a gentle breeze blowing, so the climate seemed okay to me, but a flier on Pitzer bulletin boards made the local *idée fixe* a little clearer: "Diversity and Campus Climate: You are invited to participate in a discussion about campus climate."

Another advertised: "Queer Dreams and Nightmares: What is it like to be a student at the Claremont Colleges? Student panel discussion addressing the current climate at the 5-Cs, both academically and socially." This was part of a conference entitled, with that profusion of punctuation that is the secret fraternity handshake of post-modern academics, "[Re]Defining a Queer Space at the Claremont Colleges."

The university's main concern appears to be to make students feel "comfortable," a word that reappears constantly in Claremont publications despite the obvious hopelessness of the project. The only way to make 19-year-olds feel comfortable is to wait 30 years while they sag into their well-padded maturities. Right now, they are teenagers, and their surging hormones have far more important emotions for them to feel than comfort. Adults, however, who make careers out of encouraging kids to mold permanently self-pitying identities around their transient social discomforts, have much to answer for.

A series of semi-nonexistent "racial incidents," such as liberal Scripps students advertising a racial sensitivity

seminar with posters featuring the N-word, were parlayed by activists into a mood of dread. Kerri F. Dunn, a 39-year-old academic prole, a visiting professor of social psychology at CMC whose contract was up in June, repeatedly harangued her students about the racists and sexists lurking in the shadows. On March 9, she gave a fiery speech

ADULTS WHO MAKE CAREERS OUT OF ENCOURAGING KIDS TO MOLD PERMANENTLY SELF-PITYING IDENTITIES AROUND THEIR TRANSIENT SOCIAL DISCOMFORTS HAVE MUCH TO ANSWER FOR.

at a campus event on "Hate Speech Versus Free Speech." She then walked to her 1992 Honda Civic and returned some time later, claiming she had found it spray-painted with anti-black, anti-female, and anti-Semitic slurs. The Irish-American Dunn pointed the finger at her own students, arguing that only they had heard she was considering converting to Judaism: "How else would they believe I was Jewish unless they were in my class?"

Dunn's allegation triggered a frenzy of fear and loathing.

Although faked hate crimes have become routine in the years since the Tawana Brawley hoax, the college presidents immediately canceled the next day's classes (costing parents paying the full \$37,000 per year list price for 150 days of education about \$250 each, or close to \$2 million in total at list price). At the mass rally the next night, Dunn announced to rapturous applause: "This was a well planned out act of terrorism. And I don't believe for one second it was one person. I think that there's a group here, a small group, but I do believe that there is a group here that perpetuates this in all different kinds of ways."

Dunn's image of a secret goon squad of marauding junior Straussians was as memorable as it was preposterous, but the administration had already been apprised of the unsurprising truth. Earlier that day, two eyewitnesses had told the Dean of Students that Professor Dunn had slashed her own tires. The FBI and local police quickly found

inconsistencies in Dunn's story. A week later, they announced publicly that Dunn had done it. (They also found that during her mid-30s, Dunn had been arrested three times, twice for shoplifting, once for driving with a fake license.)

University officials suspended Dunn, but with pay, and continued to rent her a replacement car. A suddenly indecisive Gann ruminated, "One has to learn to perhaps live with ambiguity here, and never know the answer and reach a closure because the likelihood of actual prosecution ... is very small."

One Claremont college president told me that my comparing the reaction to the Reichstag fire was not the "least bit appropriate." He informed me, "The full campus community felt that this was a very positive day for everyone involved. If you had been here you would have felt the positive energy in the student body, as well as a commitment to change that I share."

If having your entire university jerked around by a criminal professor who tries to frame her white male students for her own hate crime is a "very positive day," I'll think twice before paying \$74,000 per year to send my two sons there. ■

No Color, No Crime

Cornell doesn't call it "hate" when black attackers beat a white student.

By Ryan M. Horn

WHEN IS A HATE CRIME not a hate crime? To officials at Cornell University, the answer is as obvious as the difference between black and white.

After leaving a Nov. 9, 2003 concert by the Nappy Roots and Ludacris, a female student was attacked by six people.

First she was physically threatened and harassed with racially charged rhetoric; then her head was hit so hard that her eardrum ruptured. Upon losing her balance from the blow and falling to the ground, she was repeatedly kicked in the face and much of her hair was pulled from the scalp. It took 13 stitches to close the gash on her mouth, and her eardrum is not expected to heal for 18 months.

The Cornell University Police Department (CUPD) had four of the assailants in custody 11 days later, but despite the viciousness of the attack, LaToia Harris and Tieara Leckey—neither one a student—were charged only with harassment in the second degree, a violation. Harris pleaded not guilty and is awaiting trial. Leckey pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a one-year conditional discharge and \$150 fine. Under the terms of her sentence, if she stays out of trouble for one year, the charges will be dismissed and she will have no criminal record. Before the victim has healed, it will be as if the incident had never occurred.

A third defendant was later arrested, pleaded guilty, and remains to be sentenced.

The other assailants were two 14-year-olds who were issued juvenile appearance tickets. According to Sara Townsley, a Cornell columnist and former U.S. Army JAG Corps prosecutor, the juvenile who inflicted the worst injuries was already on probation for a similar assault.

No battery or aggravated assault charges were filed. There will be no other felony charges. And even though police confirmed that the attack involved racial statements, the possibility of a hate-crime prosecution was quickly shelved.

But this miscarriage of justice has not caused Ithaca to erupt in race riots. There has been no looting. Not a single demonstration has been planned. No one has cried or heard, "No justice, no peace." The reason? Unlike Cornell's other alleged hate crimes, this victim was white and the perpetrators were black.

According to authorities, there had been a previous "minor" altercation inside the concert hall. It started with, "Get your white hair out of my face." After the student put her hair up to get it out of the way, two of the assailants punched her. At that point the student and her friends moved to another part of the room. After the concert, the victim

separated from her friends and soon found herself surrounded by the same group of five black females and one black male. Just before receiving the brutal beating, the victim was told, "We're gonna f**k up your pretty white face."

At first, university officials appeared to be following the standard script for dealing with alleged hate crimes. But each passing week has revealed the university's actions to be markedly different from those employed in the past.

On Sept. 19, 2000, an Asian female student reported that she had been walking down the campus's main road when several white males driving by yelled derogatory ethnic remarks at her. She claimed that when she shouted an obscenity back at them, the vehicle stopped, and two men jumped out, grabbed her, and sexually fondled her. Immediately, the university posted media advisories on the Internet, sent a "crime alert" e-mail to everyone on campus, and had information distributed in residence halls. By September 29, Cornell's daily newspaper had run numerous front-page stories, the Student Assembly had passed a "Resolution Condemning Hate Crimes," and several organizations had sponsored events to raise awareness.

Similarly, on Jan. 29, 2002, a Cornell News Service release, which preceded another crime alert, stated that a student

of Mexican descent told authorities that she and a friend were walking through campus when a group of white men in a pickup truck “began to follow ... and yell racial slurs against Latinos/ Hispanics.” She further claimed that two of the men were carrying planks or bats and proceeded to chase them, though she and her friend escaped.

But the attack of November 2003 has gone virtually unnoticed. In stark contrast to past administrative action, there still have been no statements posted on any Cornell website. To date, no e-mail has been sent to notify students, and no information has been provided in the dormitories. According to Linda Grace-Kobas, interim vice president for communications and media relations, the

perpetrated solely on the basis of race or discrimination.”

But this changes the definition of a hate crime, in direct conflict with New York State law, federal law, and even Cornell’s own “Bias Activity Protocol.” A bias/hate crime is defined by Cornell as “a criminal offense committed against a person or property which is motivated, *in whole or in part*, by the offender’s bias against a race, religion, ethnic/national origin group, or sexual orientation group.” This definition is taken directly from the FBI’s Hate Crime Data Collection Guidelines. Moreover, that same program also recognizes that “Under federal, state and local laws, a bias/hate crime is defined as any criminal offense that one could *reasonably*

The university immediately considered the other incidents hate crimes even though there were no witnesses, no physical injuries to any victim, and no suspects. And were that not enough, though there have been no public statements issued, sources close to the CUPD indicate that police know that both incidents were hoaxes.

The week of the concert attack, the *Ithaca Journal* submitted a Freedom of Information Law request to Cornell asking for documentation, including Cornell Police reports of the assault. Simeon Moss, Deputy Director of Cornell News Service, dismissed the request, stating that Cornell is not an agency of government subject to the law. The paper subsequently asked the New York State Committee on Open Government for an advisory opinion, and executive director Robert Freeman said reports from Cornell Police are within reach because members of the Cornell Police are deputized through the Tompkins County Sheriff’s Office.

More than three months after the assault, the university finally released some of the documents relating to the investigation. But there was nothing about why no hate-crime charges were sought. The defendants argued that the incident was not a hate crime, stating “no one in [our] group used words that were biased or racial.”

Cornell’s lackluster pursuit of justice for a white student and its tortured reading of law and policy seem bizarre—or maybe not. After all, this is a place that uses skin color as a factor in admissions and has nestled among its park-like gorges and rolling foothills dormitories based on race. ■

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THE ATTACK OF NOVEMBER 2003 HAS GONE VIRTUALLY UNNOTICED. IN STARK CONTRAST TO PAST ADMINISTRATIVE ACTION, THERE STILL HAVE BEEN NO STATEMENTS POSTED ON ANY CORNELL WEBSITE.

attack simply did not cause outrage in the community. “It didn’t resonate because it involved non-campus people,” she said.

Unlike the cases in which a person of color was the alleged victim, every Cornell official questioned about this incident categorically denies that it could have been a hate crime. Grace-Kobas attempted to justify the decision to local press by saying, “[T]he law is very specific when it comes to hate crimes. There were a lot of interviews conducted—and based on statements by the victim, eye witnesses and those accused of the crime, it was determined that the incident did not meet that criteria.” According to Captain Curtis S. Ostrander, deputy director of the CUPD, it would have had to be “a crime

and prudently conclude is motivated, *in whole or in part*, by the alleged offender’s bias against an individual’s actual or perceived age, ancestry or ethnicity, creed, disability, gender, gender identity or presentation, height, immigration or citizenship status, marital status, national origin, race, religion, religious practice, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation or weight.”

Five black women make hostile statements that refer to a young woman’s “white hair,” and it is later ripped from her scalp. The assailants tell the victim, “We’re going to f*ck up your pretty white face,” and then punch and kick her until she requires stitches and her eardrum is broken. Could someone not “reasonably and prudently” conclude that this crime at least partially involved racial animosity?

International (Not So) Greatness

The U.S. wants Europe to clean up our Mideast mess.

By Leon Hadar

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE a new addition to Washington's alphabet soup—one of those mysterious acronyms that only a true insider can unlock. These provide the community of government officials, Congressional staff members, think-tankers, and editorial writers with the sense that We, the Chosen Few, are Present at the Creation of yet another government entity that will “do something” or will launch a new crusade, preferably “war,” to make the world safe from or for something—or just to have some good time. Have Acronym, Will Travel to NATO conferences or NAFTA meetings or G-7/8 Summits.

In the early 1990s, Bush I and then Clinton were promoting the idea of the United States playing a leading role in the new organization called the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum—no, that's not APECF (too difficult to pronounce) but APEC—as part of an effort to “engage” the PRC (People's Republic of China) and the ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) and press the EU (European Union) to make concessions at the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade) negotiations. So we had this APEC with which we could impress our moms (“Hey, I'm flying to the APEC thing in Shanghai next week.”) or annoy our colleagues (“You mean you weren't asked to Seattle to cover the APEC?”). The problem was that APEC sounded too much like AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), the pro-Israel lobby in Washington. So I suppose it could get confusing when you

announced to reporters that POTUS was going to APEC to do a “bilateral” with the PM. Was he going to meet with the PM of Israel or of China?

Never mind. We Beltway types have a new abbreviation to show off. G-M-E, the Greater Middle East initiative (or plan, or proposal, or whatever) coming soon to your favorite world capital. Officially, it will be unveiled by P-43 himself at the coming G-8 Summit scheduled for June 8 in Sea Island, Georgia.

Now, if you are a bona-fide Davos Man, you may have already seen a preview of the GME in the WEO (World Economic Organization) this January, where the CEO-U.S., Vice President Dick Cheney, introduced a “forward strategy for freedom that commits us to support those who work and sacrifice for reform across the Greater Middle East.” After all, the great experiment in democracy-manufacturing has proven to be a resounding success in Iraq, where Ahmad Chalabi and the other Founding Fathers of that nation have just completed writing a constitution that would have made Madison green with envy, and Shi'ites, Sunnis, and Kurds are singing “Kumbaya Allah” around the campfire in Karbala (or is that a suicide bombing?). So America's imperialists want to replicate that triumphal democratic revolution in other Arab and Moslem countries. Why should the Iraqis be the only ones to get the rewards of neoconservative experiments and enjoy the services of a Paul Bremer? The Bush administration is intent, therefore, on “promoting

democracy throughout the entire Middle East and beyond,” Cheney revealed in Davos.

Cheney was speaking to a largely non-American gathering, suggesting that it has become sort of *passé* to start the promotion of grand U.S. policies at home. Remember the good old days when those Marshall Plans and Middle Eastern “doctrines” were first proposed to Congress and the American people? Now it's the global elites who get the first look at what American taxpayers are going to spend their money on in the coming years. “We call upon our friends, and allies everywhere, and in Europe in particular, to join us in this effort,” Cheney pleaded with the French and German officials and business executives meeting in the Swiss mountain resort. You know, all those “Old” Europeans—the decadent, the impotent, the effeminate wimps and anti-American “men” from Venus, not to mention anti-Semites—who just as Baghdad started to look like the Gaza Strip were suddenly becoming so “New,” friendly, and amiable. Hey, we will even call those damn fries French again! Just help us get out of the mess in Iraq—and preferably before November.

In the audience in Davos were also all those guys from the “entire Middle East and beyond” who were expected to join the VP in his great campaign to transform the GME into Jefferson-Land, free of “rogue states” and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and very woman-friendly. There, listening to the VP, was our ally, Pakistani dictator Gen.

Musharraf, who between cellphone calls to his pardoned pal Dr. A.Q. (“Would you like to buy a nuke?”) Kahn, was discussing women’s rights with Saudi sheiks, election systems with Egyptian military officers, and press freedom with all those tin-can despots from the “Stans” of Central Asia, who look and sound like they are auditioning for roles in the “Great Dictator: The Third Generation.”

Reflecting the same spirit of let’s all kiss and make up, Nicholas Burns, the U.S. Representative to NATO, took part in another preview of the GME in Prague late last year, during which he called on “Old” and “New” Europeans to let bygones be bygones and focus their efforts on bringing peace and security to the GME. And, by the way, please send a few troops to help us in Iraq and Afghanistan. Again, if you don’t mind, could you do that before November? Thanks in advance!

If VP Cheney accentuated the “democracy” part of the American plans for the GME in Davos, Ambassador Burns, while never using the “E” word—you know, empire—was proposing in Prague that American-controlled NATO establish dominance in the GME. And voila, it’s Good Morning Baghdad, and Cairo, and Ankara, and Islamabad, and Kabul, and ...

So what exactly is the “Greater” Middle East, and what are we supposed to be doing there? We don’t have a lot of details. A report about the U.S. Working Paper called “The G-8 GME Partnership” was leaked to *Al Hayat*, a London-based Arabic newspaper in February (some suspect that this was done by Saudi officials interested in sabotaging the plan). There is a lot of discussion about promoting democracy and good governance, parliamentary exchange and training, literacy corps, digital knowledge initiative, with all the familiar globalization mumbo-jumbo.

While a few human-rights activists in Cairo and Amman might take all this stuff seriously, or at least they are saying so in the hope of receiving a fat grant, most of the of the Arab governments dismiss it as American rhetoric and their message to the Bushies is quite clear: hold a one-man, one-vote election in Saudi Arabia (or Egypt or Algeria or Jordan or any other Arab country) and you’ll ensure that an anti-American Islamist party will come to power.

And where is this GME, where is the “entire Middle East and beyond” located? That’s not spelled out anywhere. So we have to guess. Traditionally, Americans associated the Middle East with the Arab states in North Africa, the Levant (Near

“Islamistan,” the Palestinian-Israeli conflict becomes a sideshow, one of the many other conflicts that beset this region (Kashmir, Southern Sudan, Kurdistan). From that perspective, there isn’t really any urgency in trying to resolve it. We have to look at the Big Picture of the lack of democracy, free markets, and secularism in the GME before we deal with minor issues like Arabs and Jews killing each other in Jerusalem. On the eve of the war in Iraq, the administration promised the Europeans and Arabs that “the road to Jerusalem leads through Baghdad” and that a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would follow the ousting of Saddam Hussein. Now the road to Jerusalem leads through Kabul,

IF WE FOLLOW THIS AMERICAN “ROAD MAP,” WE’LL PROBABLY HAVE A GREATER ISRAEL BEFORE WE GET A GREATER MIDDLE EAST.

East/Eastern Mediterranean), the Persian Gulf members of the Arab League, and Israel, plus Iran and perhaps Turkey (which actually wants to become part of Europe). But for the Bushies, size seems to matter and that Smaller Middle East (SME) has been expanded and extends now from Morocco, North Africa, and the Horn of Africa through the Balkans, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and the former Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia, and including Pakistan, Bangladesh, and everything up to the borders of China.

The administration seems to like this redefinition of the Middle East from an SME to a GME, “because it identifies American action with a positive approach—a vision of unification and reform to Islamic civilization as a whole,” suggested columnist William Pfaff. The neocons certainly like this new designation—and the Europeans and the Arabs don’t—because in this GME or

Islamabad, Tunis, and the other capitals of the Greater Middle East. The problem, as the French and the Germans suspect, is that if we follow this American “road map,” we’ll probably have a Greater Israel before we get a GME.

But the neoconservatives who have been promoting this GME plan assume that the Europeans and the Arabs won’t read between the lines and figure out that it is, indeed, just another part of a strategy to impose diplomatic-military U.S. hegemony and the interests of Greater Israel, while marginalizing European and Arab concerns in the Smaller and Greater Middle East, and disguising this imperialistic project as an idealistic campaign to bring about freedom, peace, and prosperity. The Europeans have already seen that movie in Iraq, and it’s not surprising that they are a bit skeptical.

Moreover, that the Americans are spinning their GME project, coupled

with plans to establish democracy and form free-trade agreements between the countries of the region with the United States, as a turning point in the history of the Middle East and “beyond” certainly sounds amusing to the Europeans. They have been advancing for years similar initiatives aimed at reforming the political and economic systems of the states in the Eastern Mediterranean area and linking them to European markets. If in Iraq we already had the UN weapons inspectors, and we

on the relationship with Central and Eastern Europe and should not ignore developments taking place in the “southern frontier” in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean. As the wall had fallen between the eastern and western halves of Europe, “a bridge must be built across the Mediterranean,” stressed French President Chirac. First proposed by the Italians in 1989, the CSCM was formally introduced in the beginning of 1991 by France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal and was received

its signatories—Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Turkey, Cyprus, Malta, and the Palestinian autonomous region (later to become the Palestinian Authority)—to “develop the rule of law and democracy” and guarantee human and minority rights as well as “the freedoms of expression, association, thought and belief.”

Hence, the EU has already formed its own version of what can be described as the NAFTA of the Middle East, in the form of the EMP. Interestingly enough, two of the 12 governments that signed the Barcelona Declaration, Cyprus and Malta, are due to become EU members in 2004, which sends a positive message to the other members of the group, suggesting that association with the EU could lead eventually to membership. At the same time, the EU established cooperative economic arrangements with the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1989 and concluded a common external tariff arrangement in 2003.

More impressive, the EMP has become the only forum of its kind to have Israel and the Arab countries sitting around the same table, and the EU has become the major source of financial aid for the Palestinian Authority. But the inclusion of Israel and the Arab states in the EMP also explains why the plan for Euro-Mediterranean integration hasn’t gathered more momentum. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has made it impossible for the Europeans to get the Arabs and Israelis to agree to establish the kind of political and economic ties that are necessary for the creation of a free-trade area. Which is why, stress the Europeans today, the GME initiative would never get off the ground without a resolution of the conflict in the Holy Land. And if we were able to resolve that conflict, who would need the GME anyway?

PROFESSOR RICE PROBABLY SHOULD HAVE READ AT LEAST A SHORT HISTORY BOOK ON THE BRITISH IMPERIAL EXPERIENCE IN IRAQ BEFORE INVADING MESOPOTAMIA.

now know we didn’t have to invade that country, in the Middle East we already have quite a few European initiatives, and we don’t need the GME. Professor Rice, who probably should have read at least a short history book on the British imperial experience in Iraq before invading Mesopotamia, should have also tried to familiarize herself with something called the Barcelona Declaration before launching the GME initiative.

Indeed, following the signing of the Helsinki Agreement in the mid-1970’s, the southern European states, concerned about the potential for growing economic and demographic disparities between the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean, began to discuss the need to create a Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM). The idea gained momentum after the end of the Cold War and reflected the interests of the southern European countries, led by France, to assert more diplomatic influence over the Middle East and North Africa by utilizing the economic might of Europe. They argued that the Europeans were putting too much emphasis

with enthusiasm by the North African countries, Turkey, Jordan, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), and Israel.

The pressure by the southern European countries led to the convening of the Euro-Mediterranean conference in Barcelona, Spain in November 1995, marking the EU’s biggest effort to refocus its attention towards the Middle East. The conference, launching a partnership between the EU and 12 Middle Eastern and North African nations, pointed to the role that Europe could play in the Middle East and the potential for the formation of a Euro-Mediterranean bloc. The Barcelona Declaration launched the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), which regionalized and tied together bilateral association agreements between the EU and individual states reached earlier with Tunisia, Israel, and Morocco; provided for a “Euro-Med” free-trade area by the year 2010; increased U.S. aid and loans, worth \$13 billion; and offered incentives for the largely closed economies of North Africa and the Levant to integrate. The Barcelona Declaration committed

What the Bush administration has done is not only plagiarize the EU Barcelona initiatives for the Middle East but also stripped the European plan of its two important political elements that could have made it doable and added a military component that would make it unworkable.

First, unlike the GME plan, which attempts to put all the Muslim nations of North Africa, the Near East, North, South, and Central Asia into one basket and create the illusion that it would be possible to link them politically and economically to the liberal institutions of the West, the Barcelona initiative is much more modest in its scope. It proposes an ambitious but not unrealistic goal of associating its 12 signatories—the Arab states of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean, and Israel—to the EU. After all, despite their differences, North Africa, Egypt, Syria/Lebanon, and Israel/Palestine share a common history, geography, and cultural and demographic ties, and they have a closer economic relationship with the EU than with the United States. The SME is for the EU what Mexico and most of Latin America is for the United States, a strategic and economic backyard. Indeed, take a look at the map, and the idea that the 12 Barcelona signatories, all of which border the Mediterranean, would be linked to the EU certainly makes some geo-strategic and geo-economic sense. Why should Egypt, which regards itself primarily as an Arab, African, and Mideast nation, belong to the same club as Pakistan, which is actually part of South Asia? They and the rest of the GME are Muslim, respond the Bushies. So what? Just consider the conflict between Shi'ites and Sunnis in Iraq and the entire Middle East, reflecting deep historical, cultural, and socio-political tensions, and you would conclude that they are not in a mood to cooperate in this fantastic American program.

The Department of Homeland Security's proposal to fingerprint and photograph foreign visitors from 27 of the United States' closest allies is irritating potential visitors without enhancing anyone's security.

Ironically, Mexico, the major source of both legal and illegal entry into the U.S., will be exempt from the new controls due to the hypocrisy of the Bush administration, which is courting Hispanic votes for the November elections. The new policy will begin September 30th at the 50 busiest ports of entry. The 27 countries are referred to as "visa waiver" states, whose citizens do not normally need visas for short visits. Most of the countries are European, but Japan, Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand are also included. Homeland Security is arguing that the new biometric controls will be non-intrusive and will take only a second or two to implement, with the traveler placing an index finger on a small screen while a photo is being taken. The government claims it will be able to check the criminal and terrorist watch-lists using the biometric information, but the assertion is absurd as the software, computer capacity, and system interconnectivity do not exist to permit anything of the sort. The information will presumably be stored for later use, whatever that will mean.



Drug use among American soldiers has reached levels not seen since the Vietnam War.

The Pentagon is quietly moving the soldiers from the affected units back to the United States and Germany for medical treatment. Though drug use is a court-martial offense, the soldiers are generally receiving only administrative sanctions in order to avoid making the issue public. Afghan heroin is available cheaply and uncut, sometimes resulting in lethal overdoses. Recently, an entire company of Marines guarding the United States Embassy in Kabul was reassigned short of tour because so many soldiers were failing drug tests. In another instance, an airmobile regiment's helicopters were temporarily grounded because many of the mechanics were found to be using drugs. Drug use is reported to be much more prevalent among support troops than among those in combat. Sources in Kabul indicate that the narcotic abuse is a symptom of the boredom of the assignment to Afghanistan, which offers little in the way of acceptable recreation. Only small groups of special forces are involved in active operations, and the vast majority of the soldiers in Afghanistan see little or no action. Intelligence sources indicate that an investigation is going on to determine whether the drug use is simply a matter of supply meeting demand or something more sinister. One senior Drug Enforcement Administration officer has been relieved of his duties because of suspicion that he has been involved in the trafficking. A highly placed Afghan source believes that the drugs, which are produced in parts of the country where the Taliban is active, are being deliberately diverted to the Kabul market and sold to American soldiers. Normally, Afghan-produced drugs would be exported to Russia and Western Europe, which is where the most profitable mass markets are located. ■

Philip Giraldi, a former CIA Officer, is a partner in Cannistraro Associates, an international security consultancy.

The other building block of the Barcelona plan that has been removed from the American initiative is the emphasis on the need to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. “[I]deas about reform are not a substitute for the Middle East [peace] process,” explained Marc Grossman, U.S. Undersecretary of State, during a visit to Brussels in March. But “you cannot wait until there’s a complete peace,” he argued. “It’s not an excuse for doing nothing.” The problem is that that’s not the way most Arabs see it. In fact, the Bush administration’s attempts to place the Arab-Israeli problem on the back burner point to the internal contradiction in the entire American scheme. Political liberties, open elections, and a free press in Egypt, Syria, Algeria, or for

that matter an independent Palestine, would bring to power leaders who—representing the views of the majority of their elites and publics—would have no choice but to pursue anti-American policies as long as Washington maintains its current policies on Israel/Palestine. To put it differently, there is no way Washington would be able to juggle both the Greater Israel project and the Greater Middle East initiative.

In addition, while the European plan focuses very much on diplomatic, economic, and cultural engagement between the Europeans and the people of the SME, what the U.S. is proposing is a set of military protectorates in this region, starting with Afghanistan and Iraq. Again, the Europeans suspect that the neoconservative authors of the plan want to use the SME initiative as a springboard to “do Iraqs” in Iran and Syria and other provinces in the empire and want it to provide them with international legitimacy for such a strategy.

French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin has already expressed strong reservations about the GME plan, and especially about the idea of having a NATO role in the process. In an interview with the French daily *Le Figaro*, he stressed the need to “avoid a uniform approach, as one cannot treat the Maghreb [North Africa] with the same pattern as the Middle East or the Persian Gulf states, nor can one concentrate everything on the security issue.” His German counterpart, Joschka Fischer welcomed the idea of the Europeans and the Americans working together in the Middle East, but reminded the Americans of the Barcelona initiative.

The Europeans know that the GME is nothing more than a public-relations gimmick. Television images of Bush and the once “Old” European leaders committing themselves to work together to bring peace, stability, and prosperity to Iraq, Afghanistan, and “beyond” would

help demonstrate to the American voters that Bush enjoys the support of America’s allies abroad. But Chirac and Schroeder want to see John Kerry—the son of a former Foreign Service officer stationed in Europe, who was educated in a Swiss boarding school, who is fluent in French and speaks some German—occupying the White House. Kerry, as the *Economist* magazine suggested recently, is nothing less than “Europe’s candidate for president.” So the Europeans are certainly not planning to go out of their way to help Bush to win the election by providing the Republican National Committee with Europe-Loves-Bush soundbites emanating from the G-8 or NATO summits. Let Mexico’s Fox do that.

The Germans, the French, and other Europeans continue to believe that any change in the Middle East will come through diplomatic and economic engagement and not through military occupation and that the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is central to any progress in the region. So don’t expect them to support with major financial and military resources the GME plan, which aims at providing western legitimacy to the U.S. strategy in Iraq and the entire Middle East.

What America seems to be offering Europeans is not a place in the Middle Eastern driver’s seat but an opportunity to check the oil and change the tires: that is, cleaning up the mess. Some Europeans are suggesting that now that Iraq is about to run over the cliff, Americans may be even ready actually to give them the car keys. Thanks, but no thanks. We’ve got our own acronyms. ■

Leon Hadar is a Cato Institute research fellow in foreign-policy studies with the Cato Institute whose book on U.S. policy in the Middle East will be published next year by Palgrave Macmillan.

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Arts & Letters

FILM

[*Kill Bill: Vol. 2*]

Tarantino's Brain

By Steve Sailer

"I've got two words for you when it comes to violence: 'Kill Bill.'"

—Mel Gibson

FEW MOVIES ARE MORE antithetical yet more closely linked in the culture wars than Mel Gibson's epochal hit "The Passion of the Christ" and Quentin Tarantino's "Kill Bill" gore-fest, "Vol. 2," which is now out.

Last fall's "Vol. 1" earned only a fair-to-middling \$70 million from the general public, but movie nerds revere Tarantino for showing them willowy blonde assassinatrix Uma Thurman slicing open Lucy Liu's skull with a samurai sword.

Tarantino represents the apotheosis of all the fanboys who devote their youths and young manhoods to watching hundreds of chop-socky movies. Of course, the reason film geeks have all that time on their hands is because girls aren't dying to go out with them. So, their catfight fetishes grow out of their anger at women, combined with their dreams of someday finding girlfriends cool enough to like slasher flicks too.

The New Republic's Gregg Easterbrook famously denounced this Disney-Miramax production for excessive violence, noting, "Recent European history alone ought to cause Jewish executives to experience second thoughts about glorifying the killing of the helpless as a fun lifestyle choice."

Easterbrook was widely excoriated both for terminal unhipness and for supposedly resurrecting the myth that Jews control the media. Disney supremo Michael Eisner, however, did control Easterbrook's other employer, ESPN, which immediately fired him. Most commentators opined that Easterbrook had it coming.

All I can say is that if Walt Disney were alive today, he'd be spinning in his cryogenic preservation chamber.

In contrast, the elite press condemned "The Passion." Its disgusting violence, we were informed, would set off pogroms. No movie studio would do business with Gibson, ironically making him the sole owner of this vastly and deservedly popular film, a powerful retelling of vital events.

Most critics got the distinction between the violence in the two films exactly backward. The proper question is Lenin's old "Who? Whom?" In "Kill Bill," the heroine is a professional murderer and we're invited to exult in her butchery. In "The Passion," the hero is an innocent victim and we're invited to identify with His suffering. Not surprisingly, 50 million people have seen "The Passion" and, instead of anti-Semitic attacks, the most notable incidents have been repentant sinners confessing to previously unsolved crimes.

In "Kill Bill: Vol. 2," evil Bill (played by David Carradine of the old Seventies' TV show "Kung Fu") praises his ex-girlfriend as a "natural born killer." Tarantino is alluding to the 1994 film directed by Oliver Stone from a scenario by Tarantino. "Natural Born Killers" inspired a number of documented copycat murders in which trailer-trash couples watched the video repeatedly while drugged up and then committed random thrill-kills, just as Woody Harrelson and Juliette Lewis do in the film.

"The Passion" is also routinely lambasted for assuming that viewers enjoy a

certain familiarity with the most influential episode in the history of Western Civilization. I overheard the following conversation in a screening room on Rodeo Drive:

Man: "'The Passion' really doesn't work as a movie. I mean, if you don't know who the characters are, you can't figure out what's going on. And why is he washing people's feet?"

Woman: "It's like Gibson expects you to know the story already."

Man: "And it's so historically inaccurate. The men didn't have long hair back then."

Woman: "Now, what I really like is *The Da Vinci Code*."

In contrast, Tarantino is constantly applauded for cramming "Kill Bill" with countless esoteric references to obscure Seventies rubbish. He has tapped into a deep vein of nostalgia for the crud that everybody watched as adolescents. Okay, I confess, I loved Carradine in "Kung Fu" when I was 13, too. But then I grew up.

There's nothing wrong with Tarantino's brain, just with the junk he stuffs in it. Moreover, his talents, while broad, don't mesh well. He should instead direct others' scripts, while reserving his own writing—with its vivid but absurd monologues and grandstanding convolutions—for the stage.

The stylish and witty but long and talky "Kill Bill: Vol. 2" offers less gratuitous violence than "Vol. 1," yet the whole movie seems ultimately gratuitous. If you don't adore Tarantino's characters—gangsters with the souls of video-store clerks—as much as he adores them, you probably won't care to hear them soliloquize endlessly about pop culture. ■

Rated R for violence, language, and brief drug use.

BOOKS

[*Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars: The Covert Life of a Soviet Spy*, G. Edward White, Oxford University Press, 336 pages]

“Saint” Alger’s Botox

By R. J. Stove

“Audacity! Again audacity! Always audacity!”

—Georges Danton during the French Revolution

WOULD YOU BELIEVE New York’s Bard College actually boasts an Alger Hiss Professorship of Social Studies? Mere denizens of Planet Earth might find this concept only marginally (if at all) saner than an Enron Chair of Accounting, a Harold Shipman School of Medical Ethics, or a Sharon Tate Fan Club run by Charles Manson. Still, there is no denying the appeal of so bizarre a post to those gulls who continue to maintain that the Berlin Wall was built to keep Westerners out or that Spanish Republicans in 1936-1939 were fighting for anyone’s “freedom” except Red gangsters’. Probably such gulls are impervious to argument—the nailing of Hiss as a Soviet spy by the Venona documentation declassified in 1995 should have silenced even their poppycock—but anyone able to accept hard evidence will benefit from this volume, which belongs on any self-respecting Cold War historian’s shelf alongside Sam Tanenhaus’s 1997 biography *Whittaker Chambers*.

The tale of Hiss (who died in 1996, aged 92, hale in body and spirit till almost the end) is nowadays, therefore, not a whodunit but a whyhedunit. With Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, motivations are much more easily discerned. That

rancorous couple shared the outlook of Macbeth’s First Murderer: “So incensed that I am reckless what I do to spite the world.” Espionage merely served as the objective correlative for their freewheeling grotesquerie. Not so with Hiss. He remained as deficient in tempestuous sadism as in patriotism. He never needed Moscow gold—just as well, since he never received any; his labors for Stalin all went unpaid. He had nothing about him of the born rebel. Though obviously intelligent, he conveyed no downright brilliance; for the crucial functions of treachery he performed at Yalta and in helping to set up the UN, downright brilliance would have been counterproductive. Nor did his manner suggest fanaticism—Chambers, of all people, conceded that Hiss could exhibit “great gentleness and sweetness.” About Marxist dogma’s minutiae he appears to have known little and cared nothing. While his sexual life had its complications, he eschewed the frantic buggery that characterized the leading British spies’ male-bonding sessions and, indeed, that enslaved Whittaker Chambers for so long. He had—unlike such charmers from our own era as Abe Foxman and Andrew Sullivan—no convulsive, atavistic hatred of Christian social order.

So why does a non-poor, non-rebellious, non-brilliant, non-fanatical, non-philosophizing, predominantly non-perverted non-Christophobe pledge his

stayed intact, as if his face had undergone repeated injections of ideological Botox. How could this be?

G. Edward White—law professor at the University of Virginia, and quite obviously neither pamphleteering nor voyeuristic—has supplied an answer at once ingenious and chillingly credible. Briefly, it is as follows. Hiss’s treason derived from a cold, virtuosic genius for manipulating people. This genius he strengthened, rather than weakened, by a condottiere-like taste for strategic surprise: for taking huge risks and thriving on them. That Hiss struck most people as exceptionally unemotional (*Washington Post* interviewer David Remnick referred expressively to his “terrible evenness”) means, of itself, nothing. After all, any bookish male who has lost a father through suicide—and Hiss lost by this means not only his father but also his sister—is almost bound to cultivate an aura of quick-frozen detached intellectuality, Communism or no Communism. But the manipulative appetite grows by what it feeds on, and well before Hiss had formally sold his soul to the USSR he had succeeded in wrapping one of his earliest employers—Oliver Wendell Holmes, no less—around his proverbial little finger.

Hiss, in Professor White’s words, “exemplifies a comparatively unusual type ... one of those rare individuals whose traits and characteristics were complemented by, rather than conflict-

HISS’S TREASON DERIVED FROM A COLD, VIRTUOSIC GENIUS FOR MANIPULATING PEOPLE, FOR TAKING HUGE RISKS AND THRIVING ON THEM.

loyalty to the Soviet slave empire and, having pledged it, maintain for well over half a century his posture of injured innocence? Given that the evidence against him remained as strong in the 1980s as in the 1940s, would not the mask of his mighty deception have been bound to slip? With Hiss, it never did. The bland, debonair Hiss persona

ing with, the secret world of a professional spy ... [a] rare example of someone who thrived on living a secret life of betrayal and deceit.” Professor White again: “Not many people seek psychic integration through spying and lying. Even fewer are so good at those tasks that they come close to achieving their version of it. Alger Hiss was one.”

In 1954, Hiss emerged from 44 months' incarceration at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, where the prison library—this at the height of McCarthyist "terror"—included the collected letters of Lenin's widow. (Amid his wholesale sedition it is easy to forget that Hiss went to jail, not for his espionage, but for the much lesser crime of perjury. Had his compatriots adequately appreciated his true significance in Moscow's eyes, he would probably have joined the Rosenbergs in giving a whole new meaning to Walt Whitman's phrase "I sing the body electric.") One publisher whom the newly freed Hiss approached, seeking work, described how it felt to have Hiss turning on the charm:

For the first ten minutes of the meeting, I was much impressed ... More than an hour later I was bewildered. Mask succeeded mask, role role, personality personality. There was a half hour during which our actual situation was reversed, as though he had granted me an interview ... the authority with which he spoke suggested he was in charge. Suddenly something brought this phase to an end, and he became gamin-like, elusive, answering my questions with the manner of a shrewd, precocious boy who was playing games and admiring his skill at them. Another shift, and he seemed abruptly defensive.

The beauty of Professor White's explanation is that it solves enigmas left unanswered by more conventional accounts. Take the Hiss household's Woodstock typewriter. Absent this typewriter from the legal proceedings and Hiss would probably never have been imprisoned. It constituted his enemies' most damaging weapon. Chambers knew that. Hiss knew that. An ordinary criminal would have moved heaven and earth to destroy all indications of the typewriter's existence. Hiss did no such thing. With his habitual ingenuity he constructed a series of cock-and-bull yarns about a possible duplicate typewriter used by

the FBI, perhaps in collusion with Chambers, to frame him. No trace of this mechanical Doppelgänger has been discovered outside Hiss's rich fantasy life; but as long as Hiss had planted in his admirers' increasingly misguided heads

WASP hegemony over American culture is forever gone, a fact that may be cheered or mourned, according to taste, but cannot be disputed. Hiss grew up in an environment so comfortable, so free from vulgar money-grubbing and from

HISS GREW UP IN AN **ENVIRONMENT SO COMFORTABLE THAT FOR GENTEEL DECORUM ITS INHABITANTS MADE NANCY MITFORD LOOK LIKE JANET JACKSON.**

the possibility of such a duplicate, those admirers' loyalty would continue. Hitherto it had been conjectured that Hiss adopted this tactic as a chivalrous cover-up for the guilt of his wife, Priscilla. Yet however nasty (and pro-Soviet) a piece of goods we know Priscilla—who died in 1984—to have been, Hiss's eager co-opting of his own son Tony in order to further his fraudulent campaign for vindication shows that whatever drove him, maintaining family values played no part in it.

Professor White emphasizes the curious parabola of Hiss's post-conviction repute. Non-doctrinaire Old Left intellectuals of Hiss's own generation, like Dwight Macdonald, or somewhat younger, like Murray Kempton, freely acknowledged Hiss's guilt. Only with the rise of anti-Vietnam protest, with the increasingly erratic FBI management that marked J. Edgar Hoover's old age, and above all with Nixon's immolation by Watergate, did Hiss become a sought-out campus guru. That role achieved, he soon obtained the government pension that his 1951 conviction had denied him and regained his license to practice law. Then came Allen Weinstein's occasionally partisan but predominantly devastating indictment of Hiss, *Perjury* (1978), which prompted even such veteran leftists as Irving Howe and Alfred Kazin to admit in print that perhaps "Saint" Alger had lied through his teeth after all.

In some respects the world that nurtured Hiss seems impossibly remote now, thanks to Hiss's WASP origins. The

conspicuous hardship—during his early days as an unobtrusive federal bureaucrat, Hiss could already afford a cleaning-lady and a cook—that for genteel decorum its inhabitants made Nancy Mitford look like Janet Jackson. But as Professor White warns us, "there have been and there will be others" with Hiss's lifelong cunning. Hiss "could brazen out any lie," complained the ex-Trotskyist poet Delmore Schwartz. If only that aptitude were WASP-specific, we might all sleep more soundly.

Considering what a treasure it has on its hands, Oxford University Press's lack of attention to this tome's proofreading disappoints. Such typos as no spell-checker will report ("bore himself with no trace or [sic] either defensiveness or aggressiveness") occur all too often, while the present magazine's readers are particularly unlikely to welcome the repeated misrendering of Robert Novak's surname as "Novack." OUP's submission here to the current cheese-paring vogue for printing photographs in low resolution on the main paper stock, rather than according them the courtesy of separate high-resolution plates, should also be lamented. These faults, although they may well prompt individual readers to wait for a tidied-up second edition, ought not to prevent *Alger Hiss's Looking-Glass Wars* from entering the catalog of every academic library. Especially Bard College's. ■

R.J. Stove lives in Melbourne, Australia, and is the author of The Unsleping Eye: Secret Police and Their Victims.

[*The End of Blackness: Returning the Souls of Black Folk to Their Rightful Owners*, Debra J. Dickerson, Pantheon, 304 pages]

Blaming Whitey

By Elizabeth Wright

FROM THE PROMOTION of this book and from the first few pages of its introduction, a reader comes to Debra Dickerson's *The End of Blackness* expecting something other than an extensive catalogue of the sins and moral failings of whites. The author does get around to the book's supposed premise, which is a call to blacks to free themselves from obsession with past grievances and take responsibility for the choices and decisions they make, but not before she engages in a considerable amount of verbiage aimed at whites' past crimes and present incivilities.

We first get a tour of the old horror stories of bigotry—Emmett Till's murder, the duplicitous Tuskegee “experiment,” Rosa Parks's humiliation. Then come the generalizations about whites, along with some peculiar contradictions. Whites refuse to accept the “full dimensions” of their wicked past. Whites subsist only on their “windfall of skin privilege,” an implication that individual whites have achieved little through their own efforts. Whites believe so much in “their own infallibility” that when blacks fail to fit certain stereotypes, whites have to “build their own Frankensteins to fear and loathe.” And this is why elderly white ladies clutch their purses at the sight of a black man, and why whites “tremble” when finding themselves in all-black settings.

She talks authoritatively about “white supremacy,” which, apparently, like the term “racism,” has been defined downward. In Dickerson's world, just about any behavior on the part of a white that lacks at least some deference to the sensibilities of blacks can get him slapped

with the “white supremacist” label. She saves her most accusatory tone for white men, who are depicted as unreasonable belligerents who stubbornly continue to resist sharing their piece of the pie with blacks—an indication, somehow, of “masculinity” problems. She quotes a writer referencing sports, with whom she agrees, who claims that black men have taken over the “symbols of manliness.” To this, Dickerson observes that as long as black masculinity was kept “under lock and key,” the “myth of white superiority” could prevail. “Why can't Walter Mitty identify with Walter Payton?” she asks.

As usual, this interplay between groups is not described in terms of the universal contest for power that exists wherever groups interact but instead is interpreted as further proof of unique white malevolence. Why it would be normal behavior for any group of men who have been dominant in their society to allow themselves voluntarily to be displaced is never a subject for discussion by such arbiters of castration politics.

Her depictions of the unyielding, recalcitrant white, who struts around like a know-it-all, egotistical peacock, had me wondering if she is paying attention to what's really happening in this society, or if her antenna is picking up signals from a distant era. Where are these preening whites, “insulated by privilege” from the problems of blacks, who “simply choose not to know”? Is there really anywhere in this society where one can escape the relentless retelling of the story of slavery, Jim Crow, lynchings, and segregated water fountains? Set upon with the type of charges made by people like Dickerson, and eager to comply with the rules of the race game, most whites strive to keep their heads below the radar, so as not to be slammed with the ruinous accusation of “racist.”

With “hate crime” laws, a species of legislation concocted primarily to entrap whites, busily being applied, whites are circumscribed in silent, clandestine ways. Woe to that white guy who foolishly commits some low-level crime

involving a “minority.” If there is even a whiff of what might pass for a white “consciousness,” which means he can legally be stamped with the “hater” label, an over-reactive prosecutor might very well ratchet up the original infraction into “conspiracy” and “intimidation” charges. If he is deemed to have engaged in certain thought crimes in regard to race, the poor sap could find himself looking at a mandatory minimum prison sentence.

There is little chance that the “supremacists” of Dickerson's musings will find nurturing in a society with an educational system and a reinforcing media that work overtime to justify support for the special rights of politically protected groups, while teaching disdain for all things Western and white. In fact, the mental state of the University of North Carolina college student who recently wrote in the school newspaper about how “ashamed” he is of his ancestors is probably closer to the norm of today's self-abnegating whites, and offers a snapshot of the future. Such youths, in the words of Congressman Tom Tancredo, “now cower if asked to react positively to the nation and civilization of which they are a part.”

Dickerson, caught up in railing against the sins of a bygone nation, is apparently unaware of how far the pendulum has swung. Although she rakes Louis Farrakhan over the coals for his excesses, some of her diatribes against whites sound like they could have come straight from the pages of *The Final Call*.

In the book and in interviews, Dickerson claims that she expected her criticisms of blacks to be looked upon as “incendiary” and “provocative.” She anticipated being denounced by prominent blacks and maybe even declared “self-hating, insane, or money hungry.” Perhaps she thought it best first to hurl her thunderbolts at whites in order to avoid incurring the ire of the liberal establishment.

As a black, I am disappointed that frank discussions on race are still at the stage where some of the most obvious and even trite observations are billed as

“provocative” and “controversial,” as if it is daring merely to point to that which is broken and to urge that practical steps be taken to fix it.

In spite of her many declarations such as, “There is work to do, and it must be done by black people,” she cannot resist burdening others with a responsibility

SHE ADMITS THAT **NO BLACKS PARTICIPATED** IN THE D-DAY INVASION. STILL SHE SCORNS THE PRODUCERS FOR **EXCLUDING A BLACK PRESENCE** IN A FILM.

to blacks—even the country’s newest arrivals. In a testy discussion about immigrants, she equates them in their attitudes with whites. “Modern whites and even the freshest of immigrants ... are blasé about the ugly, willfully amorphous past of American infamy.” One wonders if she would like to see immigrants consigned to sensitivity training sessions so they might learn better to appreciate the everlasting sufferings of blacks. Whites, here again, are the culprits. “Partially to assuage that guilt over their treatment of blacks, whites fawn (politically) over Asians and Hispanics.” Dickerson is not impressed by studies that explain why Asians meld so well into American society due to their high level of academic achievement and stable family and work patterns. Instead, in one case she refers to such observations by an author as a “typical example of fawning over the industrious, well-mannered Koreans.” She appears to resent the fact that Koreans and Asians in general tend to live in white, middle-class communities where they absorb mainstream values.

Although she makes much of the supposed innate strength and fortitude of blacks, as demonstrated by their ongoing survival, she would still have them look to others for forms of psychological uplift. For instance, in a strange commentary on the film “Saving Private Ryan,” Dickerson complains about the movie’s failure to include black soldiers storming the Normandy Beach. Since she knows the history, she admits that no

blacks participated in the D-Day invasion. Still she scorns the producers for excluding a black presence in a film, which she says was “meant to restore America’s sense of comity, joint endeavor, and high moral purpose.” Why not some “symbolism” here, she asks, even if it means contradicting the facts of history?

She takes a similar tack in denouncing those who insisted that the September 11 memorial to the firemen who perished on that day should be a true representation of those men, all of whom were white. Why play up those “three white men in their segregated fire department”? What is wrong with bending the truth and turning the monument into a symbolic rainbow of racial minorities? After all, she reasons, it was “an attack on America, not on the fire department.”

It is the leadership’s obsession with just this kind of trivia and fruitless symbolism that has confused so many blacks over the years and kept them stymied in the pursuit of worthless token goals. It is surprising that someone who would write that blacks

“should ignore whites qua whites and focus on being prime movers,” would then suggest that blacks indulge themselves in still more counterproductive distractions. She manages to make her case for symbolic inclusion and at the same time maintains that blacks should stop “constantly beseeching whites for reassurance.”

Dickerson offers many sensible calls for blacks to straighten up and fly right. They “must take the reins of uplift in their own hands,” and they “must look inside themselves and decide that they’re tired of being the designated losers ... tired of fratricide.” Such a changed outlook would signify a confident people. But where would such confidence come from? It would have to be rooted in genuine accomplishments, where the individual perceives his group’s achievements as a reflection of his own potential.

In my Bronx neighborhood, where Hispanic immigrants have settled over the past couple of decades I see the manifestations of such confidence. As families establish themselves, a turnover in store ownership ensues, the signs and shingles of professionals—doctors, lawyers, dentists, accountants—appear on buildings. New businesses begin to pursue clients. A once desultory and commercially moribund neighborhood is revived.

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These achievements come about due to cooperative efforts among individuals who share not only a common background but a special intangible attribute: trust. Thomas Sowell calls trust the "indispensable, crucial ingredient" in relations among members of a group. In his book *Authentically Black*, John McWhorter puts it aptly. "Look around," he writes, "other ethnic groups' self-regard is based on their accomplishments ..."

When a Hispanic youth in my neighborhood walks out of his home, he witnesses around him the commercial successes of his own people and benefits from the stability that such success brings. Being nurtured in an environment where it becomes your turn to contribute to the whole reinforces a self-reliance that is not bred by sitting in at lunch counters, or forcing your way into

In the not-so-distant past there was a period when an entrepreneurial spirit overtook scores of blacks. Such people commercially dominated their own Negro districts in small towns and in cities such as Pittsburgh, Chicago, Durham, Nashville, Birmingham, and Washington, DC. The socially disruptive effects of integration, and a civil rights leadership that was single-minded in its quest to turn over all educational and entrepreneurial functions to whites, put the brakes on such self-reliance and, in fact, turned such communities into novelties. No longer could the exemplary influence of black businessmen compete with the tempting prospects of milk and honey promised by the new leaders.

When the restrictions of segregation were lifted and blacks could have taken advantage of both worlds, maintaining their own indigenous institutions while

policies and appear to be in synch with current demands for reparations.

Perhaps all is not lost, however, when a man like Kenny Gamble can find his way from the world of popular entertainment back to the past, where he is actively taking part in reviving a commercially dormant black neighborhood. Not cited by Dickerson, and older than the hip-hop crowd, Gamble made his millions as a successful music composer and producer in the 1970s and 1980s.

In 1992, he returned to the blighted South Philadelphia neighborhood of his childhood with a determination to help in its revitalization. After establishing the Universal Retail Company, Inc., he purchased dozens of abandoned buildings, which are being renovated as low-income housing, and rehabilitated scores of empty storefronts. He has already created jobs through his construction company and hopes to create many more as he assists in the growth of hundreds of black-owned businesses.

During his music years, Gamble did some serious thinking and came to realize that the drive for civil rights brought negative baggage along with it. Last year, to a *Philadelphia News* reporter he explained that the integration movement was not well thought out, since it "devastated the black community." His plan, he says, is "about educating our children and their families. It's about private and economic development ..." He talks of his desire to see black residents in control of their neighborhood's economy. Just like other ethnic groups.

If American blacks ever do find their way back to the better part of their history, it will be due to the efforts of the enlightened Kenny Gambles among us. One of Debra Dickerson's final exhortations is that blacks should "monitor white people, so as to safeguard their piece of the pie." No, Miss Dickerson, blacks should be monitoring only their own hard work and the success of their own entrepreneurial initiatives, so they can return to baking their own pies. ■

Elizabeth Wright is the editor of Issues & Views.

ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE BRINGS SELF-RESPECT AND DESERVED ADMIRATION.

places where you are not wanted, or bullying a cowed corporate executive into dispensing some form of favoritism.

For any group, economic independence brings not only self-respect but the deserved admiration of outsiders. This is what educator Booker T. Washington meant when, in 1896, he asserted that respect comes to the Negro "who owns a two-story brick house," and warned blacks that "a landless race is like a ship without a rudder." It's what was meant by the abolitionist Martin Delany when, almost a half century earlier, he chided the black middle class, already a growing force long before the official end of slavery, for choosing to remain consumers instead of becoming producers of necessary goods. "[White men] build houses, and we rent them. ... They manufacture clothes and wares, and we garnish ourselves with them." He exhorted blacks to cease "examining, complaining about, and moralizing over" their condition, and do something constructive about it.

benefiting from contact with the larger society, leaders compelled them instead to place liability for their past and future into the hands of whites. In the words of Shelby Steele, they settled for being a "contingent people" and became "mired in a protest-group identity." Steele calls this turn of events the "greatest miscalculation" in black history.

Dickerson hints at the importance of economic unity and speculates on what the next generation might offer in terms of racial progress. She cites what she considers the attributes of the so-called hip-hop generation. In contrast to previous generations, she claims, "young blacks have a different political agenda." Maybe so, but there is no evidence that this generation is rejecting the conventional civil rights indoctrination, which teaches success through entitlements. These "entertainment entrepreneurs" seem to have rather narrow perspectives when it comes to business enterprise, which they entangle with political goals. In general, they have no beef with affirmative action

[*The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse*, Gregg Easterbrook, Random House, 376 pages]

Can't Get No Satisfaction

By Kara Hopkins

THE CYNIC LOCATES happiness in bad memory, the ascete in mastery of passions, the pilgrim in reaching his soul's harbor. But the modern looks to a super-sized, turbo-charged, ultra-enhanced whatever, guaranteed to make him healthier, wealthier, and if not wiser at least more attractive to the opposite sex. Until something with more snap and dazzle flits across his flat-screen.

Whether by internal order or external ease, the ancient quest for happiness seems never to cross a finish line. Catechisms cite a design feature: an inborn yearning after the divine. Aristotelian notions of virtue require ongoing benevolence. Positive thinking stubs its toe against crisis. And "eat, drink, and be merry" eventually wakes up with a hangover. Perhaps this is why Americans are promised life and liberty but only the right to pursue that elusive other.

Gregg Easterbrook knows where not to find happiness—and spends half a book saying so. *The Progress Paradox* proves that life is good, if not for the rest, at least for the West. Crime is down, goods are cheap, freedom abounds, disease retreats: the Affluent Society knows no ceiling. "If the Western world has known a Golden Age," Easterbrook writes, "it is right here, right now." He has little patience with nostalgia for earlier times of quieter life and higher culture: "the simpler, more innocent ethos of the 1950s denied the vote to blacks and job opportunities to women."

By most leading indicators, these are indeed the best of times, but with that prosperity comes a portfolio of excess. Rarely do we approach true hunger, but at the slightest twinge, we can order in,

drive through, or punch a few microwave buttons and a banquet awaits. Work is less labor than occupation; home is a climate-controlled bubble with a hundred cable channels and many rooms of one's own—5.3 to every 2.6 Americans. We have cars—and second cars, and recreational vehicles, and boats. Specialists attend to our ailments, travel agents book 25 million overseas trips per year, and for \$5000 anyone can have a Britney Spears navel.

Yet we are more than the sum of so much stuff. Despite strawberries in March and the polio vaccine, "Americans tell pollsters that the country is going downhill; that their parents had it better, that they feel unbearably stressed out; that their children face a declining future." The cars that offer personal freedom and unprecedented mobility bring traffic, smog, and road rage. Food at their fingertips means many cannot see their feet. The doctors who extend our lives fill them with new neuroses. And the same global communication that makes the world a village treats us to a nightly parade of natural disasters, epidemics, wars and rumors of. We are the most pampered people in history and, quite possibly, the most miserable.

Easterbrook the statistician is at his best cataloguing modern luxuries in delicious detail. But after stacking them up, he turns to the pile and, with the wonder of one discovering A Great Truth, pronounces a paradox: can't buy me love. It's a revelation that has visited

sun rises for the first time over the author—"Why do so many walk around scowling rather than smiling at their good fortune in being born into the present generation?"—and so begins another book in which he splits time between guru and revolutionary.

Any number of factors feed our malaise: the individualism that has us all bunking in "really nice hotel room[s], but not having a good time because no one else came along on the trip;" the self-esteem craze; the rise of victimology; blurred needs and wants; fear that the prosperity soufflé will fall; ascendant nihilism; less sleep; more debt; round-the-clock media locked on catastrophe. And noise and crowds and the Joneses, and finally, at the end of it all, or perhaps beneath most: "we begin to hunger both for comfort and meaning." Since we have more than enough of the first, Easterbrook sets sail for the second and, by Oprah, he's right. And not quite. For we may well lack meaning, but it does not live where he looks.

The secular religion of self-help preaches an easy gospel well suited to a society grown soft round the edges. Its directives don't offend: think positive, play nicely with others, say thank you. "Meaning may be divinely conferred," Easterbrook concedes. "If not, we can create meaning by living decent and admirable lives." A strange sort of spirituality results, the expressions of which all lead back to self. In a chapter entitled "Selfish Reasons to Become a Better

THE SECULAR RELIGION OF SELF-HELP PREACHES AN EASY GOSPEL WELL SUITED TO A SOCIETY GROWN SOFT ROUND THE EDGES.

others from Shakespeare, who called contentment the crown kings seldom wear, to Nietzsche, who noted "a little makes the way of the best happiness." Neither history nor literature claim that progress comes without a cargo of perils, a theme familiar to any child who has read *Frankenstein*. But it is as if this

Person," Easterbrook writes, "Being forgiving is good for *you*. ... It's in your own self-interest to work toward a positive mental quality such as forgiveness." "Increased spiritual awareness would be in our self-interest." And later, "All this matters not as a moralizing sermon but a matter of self-interest." Perhaps he

believes this; perhaps he thought it was all he could sell to a nation proud of its overstuffed storage units.

But the church of the self fast separates from the state of global happiness Easterbrook would build, for he expects those who buy \$24.95 books to do something squarely at odds with self-interest: divest their wealth. Enter the progressive stock and trade that he probably wanted to focus on all along but knew would show better against a backdrop of unsatisfactory capitalism. "America cannot enjoy a clear conscience," he writes, "until it provides health coverage for all, pays a living wage to those at the bottom, and devises a system in which corporate leadership is not based on deceit and greed."

By his calculus, too little leaves us wanting for basics and too much makes us wander after meaning, but some "just right" midpoint known only to Goldilocks and Marx should settle the paradox. Absent in his grand plan is any admission that capitalism created our prosperity and might be necessary to sustain it. (Could it be that discontent is a near neighbor to competition, that self-consuming engine of growth?)

Though the haves may not be immediately happy to see their wealth confiscated, and the have-nots may not be happy to see the cost of cheap goods rise to accommodate the living wage, both should eventually turn happy because

"society would become more just." Perhaps the 63 million Americans who now occupy the upper-middle class—remember just how miserable you are trying to work the 16 functions on that new dish-washer!—will gladly climb down a few rungs to facilitate a leveling of fortunes. But the human predisposition toward the particular rather than the cosmic suggests that, in the absence of coercion, individual security will outpace vague notions of social justice. And history

asiago panini." But he fails to realize that lack is not merely the absence of abundance. It is often indicative of structural faults that no amount of money can seamlessly pave over. America did not arrive at her bounty by historical accident or because some fairy godmother leaned over her cradle.

But fueled by righteous compassion wrongly channeled through his fellow citizens' bank accounts, Easterbrook plows forward in his quest to "defeat

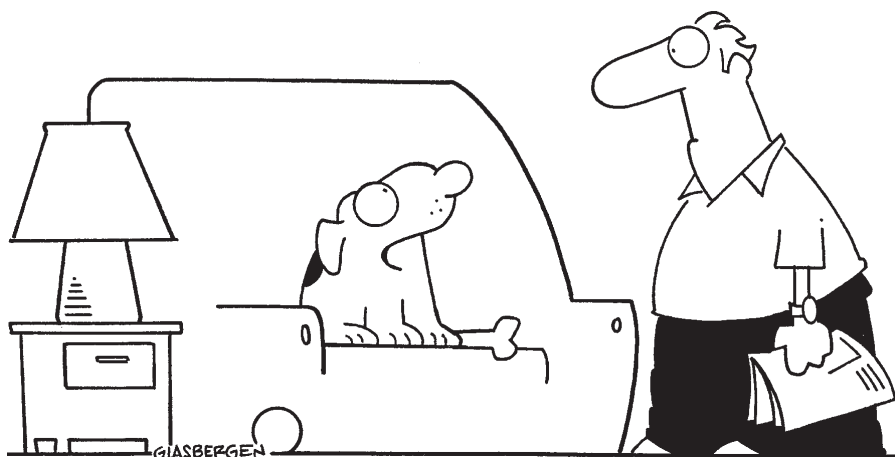
BY HIS CALCULUS, TOO LITTLE LEAVES US **WANTING FOR BASICS** AND TOO MUCH MAKES US **WANDER AFTER MEANING**, BUT SOME "JUST RIGHT" MIDPOINT KNOWN ONLY TO **GOLDILOCKS AND MARX** SHOULD SETTLE THE PARADOX.

finds more unhappy oppressed people than unhappy prosperous ones, though that would resolve the paradox.

The revolution rolls on. Once the homefront has been turned into a commune of happy Honda-drivers, we can replicate a similar utopia worldwide with massive infusions of American foreign aid. Already losing faith in his self-interest-based morality, Easterbrook castigates the "selfish view on the part of those in the United States and Europe who themselves wouldn't dream of living without central heating ... jetliner travel to college reunions, and fresh

global despair." He will trade the West's wine and roses for grape juice and daisies all around. "Seems impossible?" he asks. "So, once, did the defeats of the Nazis and the Communists." (That his program requires at least a partial resurrection of that last casualty somehow escapes the author.) From AIDS in Africa to terror in the Middle East, "[r]aising living standards and expanding liberty"—no word on how those work in tandem by this blueprint—is the cure for what ails. That global suburbia is Easterbrook's happily ever after: "[E]veryone in every nation will have access to whatever material things they require without money anxiety, while living very long lives in slender good health with recreation and romance, and in a world finally at peace." Isn't it pretty to think so.

Until we wake up. Perhaps the rich would be happier with fewer toys to gather dust and rust. But happiness is not some permanent certification affixed when accounts hit an acceptable average. It's an individual trophy continually earned by counterintuitive acts. Countries, while capable of doing good, have no conscience—only citizens with free wills. They are the best instruments of charity and the logical recipients of its happy reward. ■



"I've outsourced my job to a dog overseas who will be your companion via web cam."

Neocon Artists



A Marine officer in Iraq e-mailed me an urgent message asking for my help. I will not give his name or rank because his case is still pending, but this will

give you a sense of what the boys are going through in that God-forsaken place. My friend had arrested some men suspected of terrorist activities. He had them disrobe down to their underwear as he marched them to a camp. They were allowed to hold their wallets in their hands. It was obviously a smart move. Despite being bodily searched, clothes can conceal a weapon that may have been left lying around just before the arrest. No matter. My friend is facing a court-martial for alleged harsh treatment of prisoners, something that surely must make some towelhead firing RPGs against the Marines howl with glee. (I wonder if Marines taking no prisoners in Guadalcanal faced such humiliations?)

This is what the neocon war has come down to: young American men and a few allies are fighting an unseen enemy under atrocious conditions, many of them dying as a result, while at the same time alienating the hearts and minds of the population they are supposed to be rescuing in an unwinnable war. It is unwinnable because America's overwhelming firepower cannot be used effectively for fear of collateral damage. In an insurgency, a strength like Uncle Sam's military is nullified against the enemy's weakness, its lack of firepower. The official line is that the insurgency is carried out by small numbers of disgruntled former regime supporters and foreign fighters. This is only partly true. Iraqi fighters have been known to name their tribe and every sheikh they are related to when encountering journalists, and few of them have been Ba'athists or foreigners.

The trouble is that implanting democracy in a tribal culture like Iraq was always a pipe dream. Iraq was never a country, just a seething mass of hatred and chaos constantly erupting into violence that could only be controlled by a tyrant.

The shoe-horning of a conman like Ahmad Chalabi into a position of power by the conmen in the Pentagon is evidence of total ignorance of Arab realities by the Feiths, Wolfowitzes, and Rumsfelds of this world. By backing the convicted fraudster Chalabi, the neoconmen have denigrated and marginalized a moderate cleric such as Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, a man whose word is law to millions of Iraqis. What in hell is going on here? Is there another, far more sinister program behind the neoconmen's disastrous plans? If Iraq is to be remade—and if it happens I will change my name to Monica Lewinsky—it has to be remade in whatever form Iraqis, not the neocon cabal, want. Mind you, pessimists see Iraq on the brink of a general insurrection, with Sunni and Shia radicals joining forces. This is not going to happen. I know my Arabs, and they hate each other far more than they hate us. The fight over Iraq is not between East and West, or between Muslims and Christians, it's between Shi'ites and Sunnis, Kurds and Arabs.

But let's face it. We have made things far worse than they were, and a whole lot more dangerous for ourselves. We underestimated the volatility of the region and were utterly cynical in our pursuit of the Wolfowitz plan. Were the planners as dumb as they look now? They've been

accused of many things, but not stupidity. Were they ignorant of the region? Perhaps. On the surface it looks as if the neoconservative zealots who predicted an "explosion" of Iraqi joy when victory was won never considered the difficulties of running a vast, Islamic country. Iraqi society fell apart when Saddam was removed, as classic a mistake as is possible to make. It could, of course, be something else altogether: another Wolfowitz-Feith-Kristol-Frum-Sharon type of con to destabilize the region totally, with the latter making a grab of the West Bank and ethnically cleansing the Palestinians into Jordan. It might sound a wild guess, but stranger things have happened where Fifth Columnists like the neocons are concerned.

The fighting men in Iraq aside, the person I feel most sorry for is George W. Bush. Actually, his father. What was Bush *père* thinking while the neocons were taking his son for a ride? Bush senior always kept them at arm's length, the reptilian Bill Kristol Uriah Heaping his way into the Dan Quayle camp like the Trojan Horse that he is. Bush senior always knew better than to get bogged down in Baghdad. Now Israel's fate is intertwined with America's, stuck among hostile Arab tribes, which was the neocon plan from day one. Let's recapitulate. Those among us who were familiar with the area knew that an invasion would succeed but would serve only to recruit more terrorists. We also knew that the threat to the United States derived quite simply from its relentless moral, financial, and military support for Israel. Now we know that while the Joe McLarens, Leroy Joneses, and Juan Gonzalezes are doing the dying, the Frums, Kristols, Podhoretzes, and Wolfowitzes of this world are doing the laughing. ■

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